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STORIES BY FOREIGN AUTHORS

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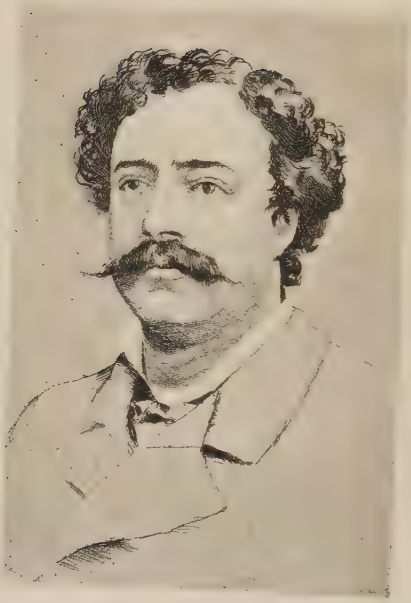

STORIES BY FOREIGN AUTHORS

ITALIAN

A GREAT DAY . . . . . By Edmondo de Amicis
PEREAT ROCHUS . . . . . By Antonio Fogazzaro
SAN PANTALEONE . . . . . By Gabriele d'Annunzio
IT SNOWS . . . . . By Enrico Castelnuovo
COLLEGE FRIENDS . . . . . By Edmondo de Amicis

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
A Great Day	Edmondo de Amicis	11
Pereat Rochus	Antonio Fogazzaro	35
San Pantaleone	Gabriele d'Annunzio	89
It Snows	Enrico Castelnuovo	109
College Friends	Edmondo de Amicis	135

A GREAT DAY

BY

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

The Translation by Edith Wharton.

A GREAT DAY

BY EDMONDO DE AMICIS

THE G——s were living in the country, near Florence, when the Italian army began preparations to advance upon Rome. In the family the enterprise was regarded with disapproval. The father, the mother, and the two grown daughters, all ardent Catholics and temperate patriots, talked of *moral measures.*

"We don't profess to understand anything about politics," Signora G—— would say to her friends; "I am especially ignorant; in fact, I am afraid I should find it rather difficult to explain *why* I think as I do. But I can't help it; I have a presentiment. There is something inside me that keeps saying: 'This is not the right way for them to go to Rome; they ought not to go, they must not go!' I remember how things were in forty-eight, and in fifty-nine and sixty; well, in those days I never was frightened, I never had the feeling of anxiety that I have now; I always thought that things would come right in the end. But now, you may say

what you please, I see nothing but darkness ahead. You may laugh as much as you like . . . pray heaven we don't have to cry one of these days! I don't believe that day is so far off."

The only one of the household who thought differently was the son, a lad of twenty, just re-reading his Roman history, and boiling over with excitement. To mention Rome before him was to declare battle, and in one of these conflicts feeling had run so high that it had been unanimously decided not to touch upon the subject in future.

One evening, early in September, one of the official newspapers announced that the Italian troops had actually entered the Papal States. The son was bursting with joy. The father read the article, sat thinking awhile, and then, shaking his head, muttered: "No!" and again: "No!" and a third time: "No!"

"But I beg your pardon, father!" shouted the boy, all aflame.

"Don't let us begin again," the mother gently interposed; and that evening nothing more was said. But the next night something serious happened. The lad, just before going to bed, announced, without preamble, as though he were saying the most natural thing in the world, that he meant to go to Rome with the army.

There was a general outcry of surprise and indignation, followed by a storm of reproaches

and threats. No decent person would willingly be present at such scenes as were about to be enacted; it was enough that, as Italians, they were all in a measure to blame for what had happened, without deliberately assuming the shame of being an eye-witness; there was nothing one could not forgive in a lad of good family, except (it was his mother who spoke) this craze to go and see *a poor old man bombarded.* A fine war! A glorious triumph, indeed!

When they had ended the lad set his teeth, tore in bits the paper clutched between his fingers, and, lighting a candle, flung out of the room, stamping his feet like an Italian actor representing an angry king.

Half an hour later he stole gently back to the dining-room. His father and mother sat there alone, sad and silent. He asked pardon of his father, who grumblingly shook hands; then he returned to his room, followed by his mother.

"Then we shall hear no more of these ideas?" she tenderly suggested, laying her hands on his shoulders.

He answered her with a kiss.

The next day he crossed the borders of the Papal States.

The discovery of his flight was received with tears, rage, and invectives. They would never consent to see him again; if he came back, they would not even rise from their seats to welcome

him; they would not speak to him for a month; they would cut off his allowance; they had a hundred other plans for his discomfiture. With the mother it was only talk; but the father meant what he said. He was a good but hard man, averse to compromises, and violent in his anger; his son knew it and feared him. It was incomprehensible that the lad should have ventured upon such a step.

The news of the 20th of September only increased the resentment of his parents.

"He will see," they muttered. "Only let him try to come back!"

Their words, their gestures, the manner in which they were to receive him, were all thought out and agreed upon: he was to receive a memorable lesson.

On the morning of the 22d they were all seated in the dining-room, reading, when there was a great knock at the door, and the boy, flushed, panting, sunburnt, stood erect and motionless on the threshold.

No one moved.

"What!" cried the boy, extending his arms in amazement, "you have n't heard the news?"

No one answered.

"Has n't any one told you? Has no one been out from Florence? Are you all in the dark still?"

No one breathed.

"We have heard," one of the girls at length faltered, after exchanging glances with her father, "that Rome was taken—"

"What! Is *that* all?"

"That is all."

"But what a victory! What a victory!" cried the son, with a shout that set them trembling. "So I am the one to tell you of it!"

They sprang up and surrounded him.

"But how is it possible?" he went on, with excited gestures—"how is it possible that you have n't heard anything? Have there been no rumors about the neighborhood? Have n't the peasants held a meeting? What is the municipality about? Why, it 's inconceivable! Just listen—here, come close to me, so—I'll tell you the whole story; my heart's going at such a rate that I can hardly speak . . ."

"But what has happened?"

"Wait! You sha'n't know yet. You must hear the whole story first, from beginning to end. I want to tell you the thing bit by bit, just as I saw it."

"But *what* is it?—the Roman festival?"

"The *plébiscite?*"

"The King's arrival?"

"No, no, no! Something much more tremendous!"

"But tell us, tell us!"

"Sit down, lad!"

"But how is it that we have n't heard anything about it?"

"How can I tell? All I know is that bringing you the first news of it is the most glorious thing that 's ever happened to me. I reached Florence this morning—they knew all about it there, so I rushed straight out here. I fancied that perhaps you might n't have heard yet—I . . . I'm all out of breath . . ."

"But tell us, tell us quickly!" the mother and daughters cried, drawing their chairs around him. The father remained at a distance.

"You shall hear, mother—*such* things!" the boy began. "Here, come closer to me. Well, you know what happened on the morning of the twenty-first? The rest of the regiments entered; there were the same crowds, the same shouting and music as on the day before. But suddenly, about midday, the noise stopped as if by common consent, first in the Corso, then in the other principal streets, and so, little by little, all over the city. The troops of people began to break up into groups, talking to each other in low voices; then they scattered in all directions, taking leave of each other in a way that made one think they meant to meet again. It seemed as though the signal had been given to prepare for something tremendous. Men said a hasty word to each other in passing and then hurried on, each going his own way. The whole Corso was in move-

ment; people were rushing in and out of the houses, calling out from the street and being answered from the windows; soldiers dashed about as though in answer to a summons; cavalry officers trotted by; men and boys passed with bundles of flags on their shoulders and in their arms, all breathless and hurried, as if the devil were after them. Not knowing a soul, and having no way of finding out what it all meant, I tried to guess what was up from the expression of their faces. They all looked cheerful enough, but not as frantically glad as they had been; there was a shade of doubt, of anxiety. One could see they were planning something. From the Corso I wandered on through some of the narrower streets, stopping now and then to watch one of the groups. Everywhere I saw the same thing—crowds of people, all in a hurry, all coming and going, with the same air that I had already noticed in the Corso, of concealing from somebody what they were doing, although it was all being done in the open. Knots, bands, hundreds of men and women passed me in silence; they were all going in the same direction, as though to some appointed meeting-place."

"Where were they going?" the father and mother interrupted.

"Wait a minute. I went back to the Corso. As I approached it I heard a deep, continuous murmur of voices, growing louder and louder,

like the noise of a great crowd. The Corso was full of people, all standing still and facing toward the Capitol, as though they expected something to come from that direction. From the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza di Venezia they were jammed so tight that nobody could budge. I heard whispers flying about: 'Now they 're coming!'—'They 're coming from over there!'—'Who 's coming?'—'The main column—here 's the main column!'—'Here it is!'—'No, it is n't!'—'Yes, it is!' All at once there was a stir in the crowd, and a big shout, 'Here they are!' and down the middle of the street a wide passageway seemed to open of itself, as though to make room for a procession. Every head was uncovered. I fought my way through from the outer edge of the crowd, to get a look at what was coming. I can feel the shiver down my back now! First, a lot of generals in full uniform, and gentlemen in civilian's dress, with the tricolored scarf; in the midst of them, girls, women, and ragged, tattered men; workmen, peasants, women with babies, soldiers of all arms; smartly dressed ladies, students, whole families clutching hold of each other's hands, for fear of getting lost in the crowd; all jammed together, trampled upon, so that they could barely move; and with it all not a sound but a buzzing, monotonous murmur; silence on both sides of the street; silence in the windows. It was awfully solemn;

half strange and half fearful. I felt as if I were in a trance."

"But where were they going to?" his parents and sisters interposed with growing impatience.

"Wait a bit!" he returned. "I fought my way into the thick of it, with the crowds on both sides of the street piling in on top of me. Lord, what a crush! They spread out like a torrent, pouring into every cranny, sweeping people on ahead of them, into shop-doors, into the court-yards of houses, wherever there was a yard of vacant space. As we went on, other streams of people kept surging into the Corso from all the side streets, which were just as closely packed; on we swept from the Capitol; and they said that there were thousands more in the Forum. Hordes kept pouring in from the Piazza di Spagna, from the Via del Babbuino, from the Piazza del Popolo. Every one had something in his hand: a wreath of flowers, a branch of olive or laurel, a banner, a rag tied to a stick. Some carried holy images uplifted above their heads; inscriptions, emblems, pictures of the Pope, of the King, of the Princes, of Garibaldi; never under the sun was there such a medley and confusion of people and things! And all the while only that low murmur, and the great multitude moving on with a calmness, a dignity that seemed miraculous. I felt as though I were dreaming!"

They gathered close round him without a word.

"Suddenly I noticed that the crowd had turned to the left. Round we all went; very slowly, with the greatest difficulty, shoved, trampled on, knocked about; with our arms pinned to our sides, and hardly able to breathe, we fought our way, street by street, to the little square by the bridge of St. Angelo. The bridge itself was crammed with people; beyond it, there were more crowds, which seemed to stretch all the way to St. Peter's. The right bank of the Tiber swarmed like an ant-hill. Crossing the bridge was a hard job; it took us over a quarter of an hour. The poor devils on each side, in their fear of being pushed over the edge, clutched the parapet madly, and shouted with terror; I believe there were several accidents.

"Well, at last we got across. All the streets leading to the Piazza of St. Peter were choked with human beings. When we reached the foot of one of the two streets that run straight to St. Peter's we heard a great roar, like the noise of the sea in a gale; it seemed to come to us in gusts, now near by, now a long way off. It was the noise of the crowd in the square before St. Peter's. We rushed ahead more madly than ever; climbing over each other, carried along, pushed, swept, and dragged, till at last we reached the square. God, if you could have seen it!—What a spectacle!—The whole huge square was jammed, black, swarming; no longer a square,

but an ocean. All around the outer edge, between the four lines of columns, on the steps of the church, in the portico, on the great terraced roof, in the outer galleries of the dome, on the capitals of the columns, on the very pilasters; in the windows of the houses to the right of the square, on the balconies, on the leads, above, below, to the right and to the left, wherever a human being could find foothold, wherever there was some projection to cling to or to dangle from, everywhere there were heads, arms, legs, banners, shouts, gesticulations. The whole of Rome was there."

"Heavens! . . . And the Vatican?" the women cried, in a tremble.

"All shut up. You know that a wing of the Vatican overlooks the square, and that the Pope's apartments are in that wing. Every window was closed; it looked like an abandoned palace; like a cold, rigid, impassive face, staring straight ahead with wide-open motionless eyes. The crowd looked up at it with a murmur.

"Over by the church steps I noticed a lot of officers and gentlemen moving about and giving orders, which seemed to be handed on through the crowd. The excitement was increasing. Every head in the square was uncovered; white heads of old men, brown heads of soldiers, fair heads of little children. The sun blazed down on it all. Thousands of shapes, colors, sounds,

seemed to undulate and blend; banners, green boughs, fluttering rags, were tossed back and forth as though upon a dancing sea. The crowd seethed and quivered as if the ground underfoot were on fire.

"Suddenly there was a shout that swept over the whole square: 'The boys! The children! Let 's have the children!'

"Then, as if every one were following some concerted plan of action, all the children in the square were lifted up above the crowd, and the men and women who carried them fought a way through to the front of the Vatican. The bigger boys made their own way. Bands of ten and twenty of them, holding each other by the hand, wriggled between people's legs; hundreds of children, some on their own feet, some carried, some pushed, a whole world of little folk, hidden till then in the crowd, suddenly swarmed in one corner of the square; and how the women screamed! 'Take care!—Make room!—Look out for my child!'

"Presently there was another shout: 'The women now! The women!' and another shuffling up and settling down of the crowd. Then a third shout, louder than any of the others: 'The army! The troops!' this time. Then came the most indescribable agitation, but underneath it all a sense of order and rapidity; none of the ordinary confusion and delay; every one

helped, made way, co-operated; the whole immense multitude seemed to be under orders. Gradually the disturbance ceased, the noise diminished, the gesticulation subsided; and looking about one saw that all the soldiers, women, and children in the crowd had disappeared as if by magic.

"There they all stood, on the right side of the square, divided into three great battalions that extended from the door of St. Peter's to the centre of the colonnade, all facing the Vatican, packed together and motionless. The crowd burst into frantic applause."

"But the Vatican?" the whole family cried out for the third time.

"Shut up and silent as a convent; but wait. Suddenly the applause ceased, and every head turned backward, whispering: 'Silence!' The whisper travelled across the square and down the length of the two streets leading to it; gradually the sound died out, and the crowd became absolutely, incredibly silent: it was supernatural. All at once, in the midst of this silence, we heard a faint mysterious chirping; a vague, diffused sound of voices, that seemed to come from overhead. Gradually it grew louder, and there was an uncertain gathering of shrill, discordant tones, now close by, now far off, but growing steadier and more harmonious, until at length it was blent in a single tremulous silvery chant that soared

above us like the singing of a choir of angels Thousands of children were singing the hymn to Pius IX.—the hymn of forty-seven."

"Oh, God—oh, God!" cried the mother and daughters, with clasped hands.

"That song re-echoed in every heart; it touched something deep down and tender in every one of us. A thrill ran through the crowd; there was a wild waving of arms and hands, as though to take the place of speech; but the only sound was a confused murmur.

"'Holy Father,' that murmur seemed to say, 'look at them, listen to them! They are our children, they are your little ones, who are looking for you, who are praying to you, who implore your blessing. Yield to their entreaty; give them your blessing; grant that our religion and our country may dwell together as one faith in our hearts. One word from you, Holy Father, one sign from you, one glance even, promising pardon and peace, and every man of us shall be with you and for you, now and for ever! Look —these our children and your little ones!'

"Thousands of banners fluttered in the air, the song ceased, and a deep silence followed."

"Well?" they cried breathlessly.

"Still shut up," the lad answered. "Then the women began to sing. There was a deep thrill in the immense voice that rose; a something that throbs only in the breast of mothers; it

seemed a cry rather than a hymn; it was sweet and solemn.

"At first the crowd was motionless; then a wave of excitement passed over it, and the hymn was drowned in a great clamor: 'These are our mothers, these are our wives and sisters; Holy Father, listen to them. They have never known hatred or anger; they have always loved and hoped; all they ask is that you should give them leave to couple your name with that of Italy on their children's lips. Holy Father, one word from you will spare them many cruel doubts and many bitter tears. Give them your blessing, Holy Father!"

The boy's listeners questioned him with look and gesture.

"Still closed," he answered; "still closed. But then a tremendous chant burst out, followed by a wild surging of the crowd: the soldiers were singing.—'These are our soldiers,' the people cried; 'they shall be yours, Holy Father. They come from the fields and the workshops; they will keep watch at your door, Holy Father, they will attend upon your steps. They were born under your rule, as children they heard your glorious cry for liberty, they fought the stranger in your name and in that of their king; in the hour of danger, you will find them close about your throne, ready to die for you. One word, Holy Father, and these swords, these breasts, this flesh

and blood is yours! They ask your blessing on their country, Holy Father, they ask you to repeat your own glorious words!' . . .

"A window in the Vatican opened. The song ceased, the shouts died out—silence. There was not a soul in the window. For a few seconds the immense multitude seemed to stop breathing. It seemed as though something moved behind the window—as though at the back of the room a shadow appeared and then vanished. Then we fancied that we caught a glimpse of people moving to and fro, and heard a vague sound. Every face was turned towards the window, every eye was fixed upon it. Suddenly, as if by inspiration, every arm in the multitude was stretched out towards the palace, mothers lifted their children above their heads, soldiers swung their caps on the points of their bayonets, every banner was shaken out, and a hundred thousand voices burst into one tremendous shout, '*Viva! Viva! Viva!*' At the window of the Vatican something light-colored appeared, wavered, fluttered in the air. God in heaven!" cried the boy, with his arms about his mother's neck, "it was the flag of Italy!"

The delight, the joy, the enthusiasm which greeted his words are indescribable. The lad had spoken with so much warmth, had been so carried away by his imagination, that he had not perceived that, gradually, as the story proceeded,

he had passed from fact to fiction; and his eyes were wet, his voice shook, with the spell of his hallucination. His words carried conviction, and not a doubt clouded the happiness of his listeners. They laughed and cried and kissed each other, feeling themselves suddenly released from all their doubts and scruples, from all the miserable conflicts of conscience that had tortured them as Italians and as Catholics! The reconciliation between Church and State! The dream of so many years! What peace it promised, what a future of love and harmony! What a sense of freedom and security!

"Thank God, thank God!" the mother cried, sinking into a chair, worn out by her emotions. And then, in a moment or two, they were all at the lad again, clamoring for fresh details.

"Is it really true?"

"Have n't you dreamed it?"

"Go on, tell us everything. Tell us about the Pope, about the crowd, about what happened next" . . .

"What happened next?" the boy began again, in a tired voice. "I hardly know. There was such an uproar, such confusion, such an outburst of frenzy, that the mere recollection of it makes my brain reel. All I saw was a vortex of arms and flags, and the breath was almost knocked out of me by a thundering blow on the chest.

After a while, I got out of the thick of it, and plunged into one of the streets leading to the bridge of St. Angelo. People were still pouring into the piazza from Borgo Pio with frantic shouts. I heard afterwards that the crowd tried to break into the Vatican; the soldiers had to keep them back, first breast to breast, then with blows, and then with their bayonets. They say that some people were suffocated in the press. No one knows yet what happened inside the Vatican; there was a rumor that the Pope had given his blessing from the window—but I did n't see him. I was almost dead when I got to the bridge. The news of what had taken place had already spread over the whole city, and from every direction crowds were still pouring towards the Vatican. Detachments of cavalry went by me at a trot; orderlies and *aides-de-camps* carrying orders dashed along the streets. Hearing their shouts, the people in the windows shouted back at them. Decrepit old men, sick people, women with babies in their arms, swarmed on the terraces, poured out of the houses, questioning, wondering, embracing one another. . . . At last I got to the Corso. At that minute there was a tremendous report from the direction of the Pincio, another from Porta Pia, a third from San Pancrazio: all the batteries of the Italian army were saluting the Pope. Soon afterwards the bells of the Capitol began to ring; then, one after an-

other, a hundred churches chimed in. The crowds of Borgo Pio surged frantically back towards the left bank of the Tiber, invading the streets, the squares, the houses, stripping the coverings from the papal escutcheons, carrying in triumph busts of Pius IX., portraits and banners. Thousands assembled with frantic cheers before the palaces of the Roman nobles who are known for their devotion to the Holy See. In answer to the cheers, the owners of the houses appeared on their balconies and unfurled the Italian flag.

"Wait a minute, I 'm out of breath" . . .

As soon as he had recovered his breath he was assailed with fresh questions.

"Well, and what then? And the Vatican—? The Pope—?"

"I don't know.—But Rome that night . . . how can I ever tell you how beautiful, how great, how marvellous it was! The night was perfectly clear, and I don't believe such an illumination was ever seen since the world began. The Corso was on fire; the churches were jammed with people, and there was preaching in every one of them. The streets were full of music, dancing, and singing; people harangued the crowds in the *cafés* and the theatres.

"I wanted to see St. Peter's again. There had been a rumor that His Holiness needed rest, and Borgo Pio was as still as it is on the

stillest night. The piazza was full of moonlight. A silent throng was gathered about the two fountains and on the steps of the church. Many were sitting down, many stretched at full length on the ground; the greater number had fallen asleep, worn out by the fatigue and excitement of the day; women, soldiers, children, lay huddled together in a confused heap. Hundreds of others were on their knees, and sentinels of all the different corps moved about here and there, with little flags and crosses fastened to the barrels of their guns. The ground was strewn with flags, foliage, flowers, and hats lost in the crush; the windows of the Vatican were lit up; there was not a sound to be heard, the crowd seemed to be holding its breath.

"I turned away, beside myself with the thought of all that I had seen, of the effect that it would produce in Italy, and all over the world; of what you would all say to it, and you most of all, father! I found myself at the station without knowing how I had got there. It was full of noise and confusion. I jumped on to the train, we started, and here I am. The news reached Florence last night; they say the excitement was indescribable; the King has left for Rome; the news is all over the world by this time!"

He sank into a chair and sat silent, as though his breath had failed him. Then he sprang up and rushed out to intercept the papers, which

usually reached the villa at eleven o'clock in the morning.

In this way he succeeded in maintaining the blissful delusion until evening. The dinner was full of gayety, the lad continued to pour out detail after detail, and his listeners to heap benediction upon benediction.

Suddenly a hurried step was heard on the stairs, and the bell rang violently. The door opened, and a tall, pale priest, with a drawn mouth, appeared on the threshold. He was a recent acquaintance of the family, who felt no great sympathy for him, but who received him courteously more out of respect for his cloth than out of regard for his merits.

As he entered, all but the son sprang up and surrounded him with excited exclamations.

"Well, have you heard the news? Thank God, it's all ended! The hand of God is in it! What do you think of it all? Tell us, let us hear your opinion!"

"But what news?" asked the priest, looking from one to the other with astonished eyes.

In wild haste, and all speaking at once, they poured out the story of the festival, the forgiveness, the reconciliation.

The priest stared at them, with the look of a man who finds himself unexpectedly surrounded by lunatics; then, with a withering glance at the boy, and a smile of malignant triumph—

"Luckily," he said, "there is not a word of truth in it!"

"Not a word of truth in it?" they clamored, turning upon their informant.

The boy, unmoved by their agitation, returned the priest's look half-scornfully, half-sadly.

"Your reverence, don't say fortunately. Since you are an Italian, say rather, 'Alas, that it is not so!'"

For a moment the others stood aghast; then, angered, as people will be, rather against those who undeceive them than against those who delude them, they turned towards the priest, involuntarily echoing the boy's words: "He's right, your reverence! Say rather, 'Alas, that it is not so!'"

The priest pointed to his own breast with a long knotty finger.

"I?" he exclaimed bitterly, "never!"

At these words, the boy's father, rudely roused from his mood of tender exaltation, and bursting, after his wont, into sudden fury, stretched his arm towards the priest, with a cry that rang through the room like a pistol-shot: "Out of my house this instant!"

The priest stalked out, slamming the door. The lad's arms were about his father's neck; and the old man, laying his hands on his son's head, said gently: "I forgive you."

PEREAT ROCHUS

BY

ANTONIO FOGAZZARO

The Translation by A. L. Frothingham, Jr.

PEREAT ROCHUS

BY ANTONIO FOGAZZARO

I.

"IT is a fine case, Don Rocco," said Professor Marin, gathering up the cards and smiling beatifically, while his neighbor on the right raved furiously against poor Don Rocco. The professor continued to look at him with a little laugh on his closed mouth, and with a glance sparkling with benevolent hilarity; then he turned to the lady of the house, who was napping in a corner of the sofa.

"It is a fine case, Countess Carlotta!"

"I understand that well enough," said she, "and it seems to me time to end it; is n't that so, Don Rocco?"

"No, Don Rocco," said the professor seriously, "on reflection it certainly is a case for the ecclesiastical court."

"I should say it was at least that," said his neighbor on the right.

Don Rocco, red as a poppy, with his two fingers in his snuff-box, kept silence, his head

bent forward and his brows knit in a certain contrite way peculiar to him, facing the tempest with his bald spot, and looking slyly between one wink and another at the unfortunate cards. When he heard the words "ecclesiastical court" repeated by his companion, whom he held in considerable fear, it seemed to him that matters were becoming quite amusing, so he forced a little smile and took a pinch of snuff between his fingers.

"Oh, you laugh!" returned the implacable professor. "I hardly know whether, having played at *terziglio* and having brought such ill luck on your partner, you can say Mass in peace to-morrow morning."

"Oh! I can, I can," muttered Don Rocco, knitting his brows still more and raising a little his good-natured countryman's face. "We all make mistakes, all of us. Even he, over there, not to mention yourself, sometimes."

His voice had the tone of a peaceful animal badgered beyond all patience. The professor was laughing with his eyes. "You are quite right," said he.

The game was over, the players got up.

"Yes," said the professor with quizzical seriousness, "the case of Sigismondo is more complicated."

Don Rocco closed his beady little eyes in a smile, bending his head with a peculiar mixture

of modesty, complacency, and confusion, and mumbled:

"Even that case can be unravelled."

"You see," added the professor, "I am well informed. It is a case, Countess, which Don Rocco must unravel at the next meeting of the ecclesiastical court."

"There is no such meeting going on here," said the countess. "Let it alone."

But it was not so easy to wrest a victim from the clutches of the professor.

"Let us then say no more about it," said he quietly. "But listen, Don Rocco; I am not of your opinion on that point. As for me, *pereat mundus.*"

Don Rocco frowned furiously.

"I have n't spoken with any one," said he.

"Don Rocco, you have gossiped, and I know it," answered the professor. "Have patience, Countess, and give us your opinion."

Countess Carlotta did not care to enter upon the question, but the professor continued imperturbably to set forth the case of Sigismondo as it had been promulgated by the Episcopal tribunal.

"A certain Sigismondo, fallen suddenly ill, asked for a confessor. Hardly was he alone with the priest when he hastened to tell him that some other person was on the point of committing a homicide, which he had himself instigated.

Hardly had he said these words when he lost voice and consciousness. The priest doubted whether S'gismondo had spoken in confession or not; and he could not prevent the crime, could not save this human life in peril, unless he made use of what he had heard in confidence. Should he do this or should he let a man be killed?"

"It is Don Rocco's opinion," concluded the professor, "that the priest should act as a policeman."

Poor Don Rocco, tortured in his conscience between the feeling that he ought not to discuss the question in a secular conversation and a feeling of reverence for his bantering friend who was an ecclesiastic of mature age and a professor in the Episcopal seminary of P——, was twisting himself about and mumbling excuses.

"No . . . the fact is . . . I say . . . it seems to me . . ."

"I am surprised, Don Rocco, that you should think it worth while to make excuses," said the lady. "It amazes me that you should take seriously the jests of the professor."

But the professor protested, and with subtle questions pushed Don Rocco to the wall and began to squeeze out of him, little by little, the peculiar combination of right instincts and crooked arguments which he had in his head, showing him with the greatest charm of manner

the fallacy of all his bad reasons and of all his good sense, and leaving him in a stupor of contrite humility. But the game lasted only a short while, because the countess dismissed the company with the excuse that it was after eleven o'clock. However, she asked Don Rocco to remain.

It was the Countess Carlotta who had chosen him, a few years before, as rector of the Church of St. Luke, which was her property. She took with him a sort of Episcopal air which was peacefully accepted by the thankful priest, as simple in spirit as he was humble-hearted.

"You would do better, my dear Don Rocco," said she when they were alone, "to bother yourself less with such affairs as that of Sigismondo, and a little more with your own."

"But why?" asked Don Rocco, surprised. "I do not know what you mean."

"Of course; the whole village knows it, but you are in complete ignorance."

Her eyes added quite clearly, "Poor simpleton." Don Rocco remained silent.

"When does Lucia return?" asked she.

This Lucia was the servant of Don Rocco, to whom he had given permission to go home for five days.

"On Sunday," he answered. "To-morrow evening. Oh!" he suddenly exclaimed, smiling with satisfaction at his own keenness. "Now

I understand, now I see what you mean But it is not so, it is not so at all."

He had at last understood that it was a question of certain rumors current in the village on a love affair of his servant with a certain Moro, a bad specimen, well known at the police court, who combined craft with malevolence and strength in a most diabolical manner. Some believed that he was not entirely bad, but that necessity and the ill-treatment of an unjust master had led him to wrongdoing; but every one feared him.

"It is not true at all, is it?" answered she. "Then I don't know what the village will say when certain novelties will happen to the servant of the priest."

Don Rocco became red as fire and frowned most portentously.

"But it is not true at all," said he, brusquely and shortly. "I questioned her myself as soon as I heard the gossip. It is nothing but the maliciousness of people. Why, the man does not even see her!"

"Oh! Don Rocco," said the lady. "You are good, good, good. But as the world is not made that way, and as there is a scandal, if you don't make up your mind to send the creature away, I must decide on something myself."

"You will do what you like," answered the

priest dryly. "Have I not got to consider what is right?"

The countess looked at him, and said, with a sudden solemnity, "Very well. You will reflect on this to-night, and to-morrow you will give me your final answer."

She rang the bell to have a lantern brought for Don Rocco, as the night was very dark. But, to her great surprise, Don Rocco carefully extracted one from the back pocket of his cloak.

"What made you do that?" exclaimed she. "You have probably got a spot on my chair!"

She got up, notwithstanding the assurances of Don Rocco, and taking one of the candles which still burned on the card table, she stooped down to look at the chair.

"There!" she said, "put your nose over that! It is spotted and ruined!"

Don Rocco came also, and, knitting his brows, bent down over a large spot of oil, a black island on the gray cloth, muttering most seriously, "Oh, yes!" and remaining absorbed in his gaze.

"Now, go!" said the lady. "What is done is done."

It seemed, in fact, as if he were awaiting her permission to raise his nose from the repentant stool.

"Yes, I 'll go now," he answered, lighting his lantern, "because I am alone at home at present, and I am even afraid that I left the door open."

Very suddenly he said "Good-night," and disappeared without even looking at the countess.

She was astonished. "Dear me, what a boor!" she said.

II.

It was a damp, cloudy night in November. Little Don Rocco was limping along towards his hermitage of St. Luke with awkward steps, his arms in parentheses, and his back arched, knitting his brows at the road-bed as he went along. He was ruminating over the dark words of Signora Carlotta, and their importance was gradually piercing his obtuse brain. He was also ruminating over the next assembly of the ecclesiastical court, over the *pereat mundus* and the subtle reasonings of the professor, of which he had understood so little; not to speak of the exposition of the Gospels for the next day, which he had not yet fully prepared. All this would often get inextricably confused in his mind. Certainly poor innocent Lucia must not be condemned, *pereat mundus*. Signora Carlotta was almost a *padrona* to him; but what about that other great *padrone? Nemo potest duobus dominis servire;* thus, beloved brethren, says the Gospel for the day.

Poor Don Rocco, as usual, had also lost at *terziglio;* and this gave a somewhat gray cast to

his ideas, notwithstanding his proverbial carelessness of every mundane interest. That hole in his pocket, that continuous dropping, made him reflect. Would it not have been better for him to give the same amount in alms?

"There is this good thing about it," he thought, "that it is a terrible bore, and that they all badger me. I certainly do not play for pleasure."

He passed on the left of the road a dark clump of trees, ascending slowly in the darkness towards three large cypresses of unequal height, standing out black against the sky. There, between the old cypresses, stood the little country church of St. Luke, attached to a small convent which had had no inmates for a hundred years. The little hillock garlanded with vines had no other structures. From the convent, and from the grassy knoll, on which stood the little cypress-overhung church, the main road could not be seen, but only other knolls gay with vineyards, villas, and country houses, islands on an immense plain, extending from the hills further away as far as the Alps and blending eastward in the mists of the invisible sea. The simple chaplain of Countess Carlotta lived alone in the convent, like a priest of silence, content with his meagre prebend, content to preach with might and main in the little church, to be called during the day to bless the beans, and at night to assist

the dying, to cultivate the vine with his own hands; content with everything, in fine; even with his servant, an ugly old maid of about forty, at whose discretion he ate, drank, and dressed himself most resignedly, without exchanging more than a dozen words with her throughout the year.

"If I send her away," he said to himself, as he passed between the high hedges of the lane that led up from the main road to St. Luke, "it will damage and dishonor her. I cannot conscientiously do it, because I am sure that it is n't true. And with that Moro, of all men!"

The clock in the bell-tower struck eleven. Don Rocco began to think of his sermon, of which only three-quarters was written, and he rushed down from the church square to the door which led into his courtyard under the bell-tower at the end of a steep and stony lane. As he opened the gate and passed across the yard he was brought suddenly to a standstill. A faint light was shining from the windows of his sitting-room, the former refectory of the monks, on the lower floor.

Don Rocco had left at four o'clock to pay his visit to the Countess Carlotta, and had not returned in the meanwhile. He could not have left the lamps lighted. Therefore Lucia must have returned before the time she had set; that must certainly be the reason. He did not fatigue

his brain by making any other suppositions, but entered.

"Is it you, Lucia?" he called. No answer. He passed through the vestibule, approached the kitchen, and stood motionless on the door-sill.

A man was sitting under the chimney-cap with his hands stretched out over the coals. He turned toward the priest and said, most unconcernedly:

"Don Rocco, your humble servant."

By the light of the smoky petroleum lamp which stood on the table, Don Rocco recognized the Moro. He was conscious of a feeling of weakness in his heart and in his legs. He did not move nor answer.

"Make yourself at home, Don Rocco," continued the Moro imperturbably, as if he were doing the honors of his own house. "You had better take a seat here also, for it is cold to-night and damp."

"Yes, it is cold," answered Don Rocco, infusing a forced benevolence into his tones; "it is damp."

And he put his lantern down on the table.

"Come here," said his companion. "Wait till I make you comfortable." He got a chair and placed it on the hearthstone near his own.

"There now," said he.

Meanwhile Don Rocco was getting his breath

again, and carrying on, with a terrible knitting of his brows, most weighty reflections.

"Thanks," he answered, "I will go to put away my cloak and come back at once."

"Lay your cloak down here," replied the Moro, not without some haste and a new tone of imperiousness not at all pleasing to Don Rocco.

He silently placed his cloak and hat on the table and sat down under the chimney-cap beside his host.

"You will excuse me if I have made a little fire," he continued. "I have been here at least a half-hour. I thought you were at home studying. Is n't to-day Saturday? And are you not obliged to say to-morrow morning the few customary absurdities to the peasants?"

"You mean the exposition of the Gospel," answered Don Rocco with warmth, for on that ground he knew no fear.

"A hint is all you need!" said the Moro. "Excuse me, I am a peasant myself, and talk crudely, maybe, but respectfully. Will you give me a pinch of snuff?"

Don Rocco held out the snuff-box to him.

"Is this *da trozi?*" said he with a wink. This word, as well as the expression "by-paths tobacco," was used in speaking of the tobacco which was smuggled into the State.

"No," answered Don Rocco, rising. "Perhaps I have a little of that upstairs."

"Never mind, never mind," the Moro hastened to say. "Give here." And sticking three fingers into the snuff-box he took up about a pound of snuff and breathed it in little by little, as he gazed at the fire. The dying flame illumined his black beard, his earthy complexion, and his brilliant, intelligent eyes.

"Now that you are warmed," Don Rocco made bold to say after a moment's silence, "you may go home."

"Hum!" said the man, shrugging his shoulders. "I have a little business to transact before I leave."

Don Rocco squirmed in his chair, winking hard, and frowning heavily.

"I suggested it because it is so late," he mumbled, half churlishly, half timidly. "I also have something to do."

"The sermon, eh?—the sermon, the sermon!" the Moro repeated mechanically, looking at the fire, and ruminating. "See here," he concluded, "suppose we do this. There are pens, paper, and inkstand in the sitting-room. Sit down there and write your stuff. Meanwhile, if you will allow me, I will take a mouthful, as it is sixteen hours since I have eaten. When we have finished we will talk."

At first Don Rocco was not disposed to agree, but he was as halting in his secular utterances as he was fiery in his sacred eloquence. He

could only squirm and give out a few low, doubtful grunts; after which, as the other man kept silence, he got up from his chair with about as much difficulty as if he had been glued to it.

"I will go to find out," said he, "but I am afraid I shall find very little, the servant—"

"Don't trouble yourself," interrupted the Moro. "Let me attend to it. You go and write." He left the hearth, lighted another lamp and carried it into the neighboring sitting-room, which had windows facing the south on the courtyard, while the kitchen windows were at the back of the old convent on the north side, where the cellar and the well were placed. Then he came back quickly, and under the eyes of the astonished priest took down a key that was hanging in the darkest corner of the kitchen, opened a closet against the wall, put up his hand without hesitating and took down a cheese of goats' milk, the existence of which Don Rocco had not even suspected; he took bread from a cupboard, and a knife from a drawer in the table.

Now it happened for only the third or fourth time in the whole life of Don Rocco that the famous frown entirely disappeared for a few moments. Even the eyelids stopped winking.

"You look surprised, Don Rocco," said the Moro complacently, "because I am at home in your house. But just keep on writing. You will understand later. We must also keep the

fire going," he added, when the priest, having slowly recovered from his amazement, passed into the sitting-room.

The Moro took the iron bellows, a sort of arquebuse barrel, turned one end toward the coals, and blew into the other in so unusual a way as to produce a strident whistle. Then he started on his supper.

What possessed him! At one moment he was devouring his food, at another he would raise his head and remain transfixed, while at another he would walk up and down the kitchen violently knocking the chairs and table. He seemed like an imprisoned wild beast which every now and then raises its fangs from the bone, listens and looks, seizes it again, leaves it, rushes around its cage in a rage and goes back to gnaw.

Meanwhile, Don Rocco was leaning over his paper, wondering still at what he had seen, unable in his unsuspiciousness to draw any inferences, listening to the steps and the noises in the next room with a torpid uneasiness that had about the same resemblance to fear as the intelligence of Don Rocco himself had to understanding. "'You will understand later,'" he repeated to himself. "What am I to understand? That he knows where the money is?" He kept it in a box in his bed-chamber, but there were only two ten-franc pieces, and Don Rocco

reflected with satisfaction that the new wine was not yet sold, and that that money at least was safe from the clutches of the Moro.

It did not appear as if the latter threatened violence. "At the worst I should lose twenty francs," concluded Don Rocco, seeking refuge in his philosophical and Christian indifference to money. He mentally abandoned the twenty francs to their destiny and sought to concentrate his thoughts on the sacred text: *Nemo potest duobus dominis servire.* At the same moment he seemed to hear, between the hasty steps of the Moro, a heavy, dull thud from a greater distance, as of a door being broken open; then the bang of a chair knocked down in the kitchen; then still another distant noise. The Moro entered the sitting-room and violently closed the door behind him.

"Here I am, Don Rocco," said he. "Have you also finished?"

"Now is the time," thought the priest, who immediately forgot everything but the presence of this man.

"Not finished yet," he answered. "But I will finish after you have gone. What do you wish?"

The Moro took a seat opposite him and crossed his arms on the table.

"I am living a bad life, sir," said he. "The life of a dog and not of a man."

At this Don Rocco, although he had resigned

himself to the worst, felt his heart expand. He answered severely, and with his eyes cast down: "You can change, my son, you can change."

"That's why I am here, Don Rocco," said the other. "I want to make confession. Now, at once," he added when he saw that the priest remained silent.

Don Rocco began to wink and to squirm somewhat.

"Very well," said he, still with his eyes cast down. "We can talk about it now, but the confession can come later. You can return for it to-morrow. It requires a little preparation. And it must be seen whether you have received proper instruction."

The Moro immediately fired off, with all placidity and sweetness, three or four sacrilegious oaths against God and the sacraments, as if he were reciting an *Ave*, and drew the conclusion that he knew as much about it as a member of the clergy.

"There, there, you see!" said Don Rocco, squirming more than ever. "You are beginning badly, my son. You want to confess, and you blaspheme!"

"Oh, you must n't notice little things like that," answered the Moro. "I assure you that the Lord does n't bother about it. It is a habit, so to speak, of the tongue, nothing more."

"Beastly habits, beastly habits," pronounced

Don Rocco, frowning and looking into his handkerchief, which he held under his nose with both hands.

"In fine, I am going to confess," insisted the man. "Hush, now, don't say no! You will hear some stiff ones."

"Not now, really not now," protested Don Rocco, rising. "You are not prepared at present. We will now thank the Lord and the Virgin who have touched your heart, and then you will go home. To-morrow you will come to holy Mass, and after Mass we will meet together again."

"Very well," answered the Moro. "Go ahead."

Don Rocco got down on his knees near the lounge and, with his head turned, seemed to wait for the other to follow his example.

"Go ahead," said the Moro. "I have a bad knee and will say my prayers seated."

"Very well; sit here on the sofa, near me, where you will be more comfortable; accompany my words with your heart, and keep your eyes fixed on that crucifix in front of you. Come, like a good fellow, and we will pray the Lord and the Virgin to keep you in so good a state of mind that you may have the fortune to make a good confession. Come, like a good, devout fellow!"

Having said this, Don Rocco began to recite *Paters* and *Aves*, often devoutly raising his knit-

ted brows. The Moro answered him from his seat on the sofa. He seemed to be the confessor and the priest the penitent.

Finally, Don Rocco crossed himself and got up.

"Now sit right here while I confess," said the Moro, as if there were nothing against it. But Don Rocco caught him up. Had they not already arranged that he should confess the next day? But the other would not listen with that ear, and continued hammering away at his request with obstinate placidity.

"Let us stop this," he said, all at once. "Pay attention, for I am beginning!"

"But I tell you that it is not possible and that I will not have it," replied Don Rocco. "Go home, I tell you! I am going to bed at once."

He started to leave; but the Moro was too quick for him, rushed to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"No, sir! you don't go out of here! Might I not die to-night? Would n't I, if the Lord just blew on me like this?"

And he blew on the petroleum lamp and put it out.

"And if I go to hell," he continued in a sepulchral voice, in the dark, "you will go there too!"

The poor priest, at this unexpected violence, in the midst of this darkness, lost his presence of mind. He no longer knew where he was, and

kept saying, "Let us go, let us go," trying to find the sofa, beating the air with his extended hands. The Moro lighted a match on his sleeve, and Don Rocco had a glimpse of the table, of the chairs, and of his strange penitent, before it became darker than ever.

"Could you see? Now I shall begin; with the biggest sin. It is fifteen years since I have been to confession, but my biggest sin is that I have made love to that ugly creature, your servant."

"Body of Bacchus!" involuntarily exclaimed Don Rocco.

"If I am familiar with the kitchen," continued the Moro, "it is because I must have come here fifty times of an evening when you were not here, to eat and drink with Lucia. Perhaps you have even found that some few francs were missing . . ."

"I know nothing about it; no, I know nothing about it!" mumbled Don Rocco.

"Some of those few small bills in your box, first compartment to the left at the bottom."

Don Rocco gave forth a low exclamation of surprise and pain.

"Now, as for me, I have gotten through stealing," continued he; "but that witch would carry off even your house. She is a bad woman, a bad woman! We must get rid of her. Do you remember that shirt that you missed last year?

I have it on now and she gave it to me. I cannot give it back because . . ."

"Never mind, don't bother, never mind," interrupted Don Rocco. "I 'll give it to you."

"Then there were some glasses of wine, but I did n't drink them all myself. And then there is the silver snuff-box with the portrait of Pius Ninth."

"Body of Bacchus!" exclaimed Don Rocco, who thought he still had in his box that precious snuff-box given him by an old colleague. "That also?"

"I drank it; yes, sir, it took me fifteen days. Do not get excited, for we are in confession."

"What 's that?"

It was a noise against the gate of the court-yard. A hard knock or a stone.

"It is evil-doers," said the Moro. "Rascally night-birds. Or perhaps some sick person. I 'll go at once to find out."

"Yes, yes," said Don Rocco hastily.

"I will go and return to-morrow," continued the other, "for I see that you certainly do not care to confess me to-night."

He took out some matches and re-lighted the lamp, saying:

"Listen, Don Rocco, I want to be an honest man and work; but I must change my residence, and for the first few days how can I get along? You understand what I mean."

Don Rocco scratched his head.

"You are to come to-morrow morning of course," he said.

"Naturally! But I have a few debts here; and going around in broad daylight, I should like to show my face without being ashamed."

"Very well," responded Don Rocco, frowning considerably, but in a benevolent tone. "Wait a moment."

He took a lamp, left the sitting-room, and returned immediately with a ten-franc bill.

"Here you are," said he.

The man thanked him and left, accompanied by the priest, who carried the lamp as far as the middle of the courtyard and waited there until the Moro called to him from outside the gateway that no one was there. Then Don Rocco went to close the gate, and re-entered the house.

He could not go to bed at once. He was too agitated. Body of Bacchus! he kept repeating to himself. Body of Bacchus! One could hardly have imagined so extraordinary a case, and for it to happen to him, of all men! His head felt as confused as when he played at *tresette* and did not understand the game and every one badgered him. What a chaos there was in that head of good and of bad, of bitterness and of consolation! The more extraordinary did the thing appear to him, with the greater faith, with the more timor-

ous reverence, did he refer it all to the hand of God. In thinking over his entrance into the kitchen, and that man seated at the hearth, memory gave him a stronger spasm of fear than the reality had, and it was immediately succeeded by mystic admiration of the hidden ways of the Lord. Certainly Lucia's fault was a bitter one, but how clearly the design of Providence could be seen in it! It led a man to the house of the priest; through sin to grace. What a great gift he had received from God, he the last of the priests of the parish, one of the last of the diocese! A soul so lost, so hardened in evil! He felt scruples at having allowed himself to be moved too strongly by the deception of his servant, the loss of the snuff-box. Kneeling by his bed, he recited, amid rapid winks, an interminable series of *Paters*, *Aves*, and *Glorias*, and prayed the Lord, St. Luke, and St. Rocco to help him in properly directing this still immature confession. Heavens! to come to confession with a string of oaths and to accuse others more than himself! To Don Rocco the heart of the Moro appeared under an image which pleased him, it seemed so new and clear. A healthy fruit with a first spot of decay; only in his case the image was reversed.

When he had gone to bed and was lying on his side, ready to sleep, it occurred to him that the next day Lucia would arrive. This thought im-

mediately suggested another, and made him turn right over flat on his back.

It brought up, in fact, a grave problem. Had the Moro spoken of Lucia in confession or not? Don Rocco remembered that he had made no remark when the man, having blown out the light, declared that he wished to confess. Neither had he done so later when the man said: "Don't get excited, for we are in confession." Therefore, there was at least a grave doubt that this had been a real confession; and even if the penitent had afterwards interrupted it, this did not in the least detract from its sacramental character, had it existed; and, consequently, what about Lucia? And his answer to the Countess Carlotta? Body of Bacchus! It seemed the case of Sigismondo. Don Rocco cast a formidable frown at the ceiling.

He remembered the *percat mundus*, and the arguments of that well of science, that extraordinary man, the professor. It would be impossible now to send away Lucia. And finally the dark words of Countess Carlotta were quite clear to him. He himself must leave: *pereat Rochus*.

The hour was striking in the clock tower. The voice of the clock was dear to him by night. His rugged heart softened somewhat, and Satan saw his chance to show him the peaceful little church surrounded by the cypresses, his own, all his own, and a certain fig tree that was dear to

him under the bell-tower; he made him feel the sweetness of the cells rendered holy by so many pious souls of old, the sweetness of living in that quiet niche of St. Luke, so well suited to his humble person, in the exercise of a ministry of deed and of word, without worldly aims and without responsibility of souls. Satan further showed him the difficulty of finding a good place; reminded him of the needs of his old father and his sister, poor peasants, one of them now too old and the other too infirm to gain their livelihood by working. And Satan finally turned casuist and sought to prove that, without betraying the secret, he could still send away the servant on some pretext, or even with none. But at this suggestion of profiting by the confession Don Rocco raised such a frightful frown that the devil fled without waiting for more. Let him keep Lucia, then, and let her see to it that she followed the sacred text: *Nemo potest duobus dominis servire.* Just see how the words of holy writ fitted the occasion! Don Rocco sought to mentally stitch together the last sentences of his sermon, but it was too fatiguing an attempt for him. He might have succeeded, however, had he not fallen asleep in the midst of a most difficult passage.

III.

He slept little and arose at dawn. Before going down he stepped to the window to consult the weather. In stepping back his eyes fell on the entrance to the cellar. It was open.

Don Rocco went down to the cellar, and came out again with a most unusual expression. The wine was no longer there. Neither wine nor cask. But outside there were fresh marks of wheels.

Don Rocco followed these as far as the main road. There they disappeared. There remained but a short curve from the edge to the middle of the road into the labyrinth of all the other wheel tracks. Don Rocco did not think at that time to go in search of the authorities in order to make a complaint. Ideas came to him very slowly, and perhaps this particular one would not be due before midday.

On the contrary he returned, wrapped in meditation, to St. Luke. "Those blows," said he to himself, "that stone thrown! It is fortunate that the Moro was with me then; otherwise, he would have been suspected." He went back to the cellar entrance, examined minutely the fractured door, contemplated the place where the cask had stood, and, scratching his head, went into the church to repeat some prayers.

IV.

At Mass there was a crowd. Both before and after it there was a great deal of talk of the theft. Everybody wanted to see the empty cellar, the broken door, the traces of the wheels.

Two bottles which had escaped the thieves disappeared into the pockets of one of the faithful. No one understood how the priest could have avoided noticing something; because he did assert without further explanation that he had heard nothing. The women were sorry for him, but the men for the most part admired the deed and laughed at the poor priest, who had the great fault, in their eyes, of being abstemious and not knowing how to mingle with people with that easy-going fraternity which comes only from emptying the wine glass together.

They laughed, especially during the sermon, at the deep frown on the priest's face, which they attributed to the empty cellar.

No one mentioned the Moro. Neither did he appear at St. Luke, either at the Mass or afterwards; so that poor Don Rocco was full of scruples and remorse, fearing that he had not conducted the affair properly. But quite late the police arrived, examined everything, and questioned the priest. Had he no suspicions? No, none. Where did he sleep? How did it happen

that he had not heard? Really, he did not know himself; there had been people in the house. At what time? Some time between eleven and one o'clock. One of the police smiled knowingly, but Don Rocco, innocent as a child, did not notice it. The other one asked if he did not suspect a certain Moro, knowing, as they did, that shortly before eleven o'clock he had been seen going up to St. Luke. At once Don Rocco showed great fervor in protesting that the man was certainly innocent, and, somewhat pressed by questions, brought forth his great reason: it was precisely the Moro who had visited him at that hour, on his own business. "Perhaps it was not on the business that you think," said the policeman. "If you knew what I think!" Don Rocco did not know, and in his humble placidity did not wish to know. He never bothered himself with the thoughts of others. It was sufficiently difficult for him to get a little lucidity into his own. They asked him a few more questions, and then left, carrying with them the only object that they found in the cellar, a corkscrew, which the scrupulous Don Rocco was not willing, through the uncertainty of his memory, to claim as belonging to him, although he had paid his predecessor twice the value of it. And now his cellar and his conscience were equally clear.

Towards dusk on the same day Don Rocco

was reading the office, walking up and down for a little exercise without going far from the house. Who could tell? Perhaps that man might yet come. Every now and then Don Rocco would stop and listen. He heard nothing but the voices of wagon-drivers on the plain below, the noise of wheels, the barking of dogs. Finally there was a step on the little path that led down through the cypress trees; a step slow but not heavy, a lordly step, with a certain subdued creak of ecclesiastical shoes; a step which had its hidden meaning, expressing to the understanding mind a purpose which, though not urgent, was serious.

The gate opened, and Don Rocco, standing in the middle of the courtyard, saw the delicate, ironical face of Professor Marin.

The professor, when he perceived Don Rocco, came to a stand, with his legs well apart, his hands clasped behind his back, silently wagging his head and his shoulders from right to left, and smiling with an inexpressible mixture of condolence and banter. Poor Don Rocco on his side looked at him, also silent, smiling obsequiously, red as a tomato.

"The whole business, eh?" finally said the professor, cutting short his mimicry and becoming serious.

"Yes, the whole business," answered Don Rocco in sepulchral tones. "They did n't leave a drop."

"Thunder!" exclaimed the other, stifling a laugh; and he came forward.

"It is nothing, nothing at all, you know, my son," said he with sudden good nature. "Give me a pinch. It is nothing," he continued, taking the snuff. "These are things that can be remedied. The Countess Carlotta has made so much wine that, as I say, for her a few casks more, a few casks less . . . You understand me! She is a good woman, my son, the Countess Carlotta; a good woman."

"Yes, good, good," mumbled Don Rocco, looking into his snuff-box.

"You are a lucky man, my dear," continued Marin, slapping him on the shoulder. "You are as well off here as the Pope."

"I am satisfied, I am satisfied," said Don Rocco, smiling and smoothing out his brows for a moment. It pleased him to hear these words from an intimate friend of the Countess Carlotta.

The professor gazed around admiringly as if he saw the place for the first time. "It is a paradise!" said he, letting his eyes pass along the dirty walls of the courtyard and then raising them to the fig tree picturesquely hidden under the bell-tower in the high corner between the gateway and the old convent.

"Only for that fig tree!" he added. "Is it not a beauty? Does it not express the poetry of the southern winter, tepid and quiet? It is like

a word of sweetness, of happy innocence, tempering the severity of the sacred walls. Beautiful!"

Don Rocco looked at his fig tree as if he saw it for the first time. He was fond of it, but he had never suspected that it possessed such wonderful qualities.

"But it gives little figs," said he, in the tone of a father who hears his son praised in his presence and rejoices, but says something severe lest he become puffed up, and also to hide his own emotion. Then he invited the professor to make himself at home in the house.

"No, no, my dear," answered the professor, silently laughing at that phrase about the little figs. "Let us take a short stroll: it is better."

Passing slowly across the courtyard, they came out into the vineyard, whose festoons crowned both declivities of the hill, and they passed along the easy, grassy ascent between one declivity and the other.

"It is delicious!" said the professor.

Between the immense cold sky and the damp shadows of the plain the last glimpses of light were softly dying away on the grayish hill, on the red vines, all at rest. The air was warm and still.

"Is all this yours?" asked the professor.

Don Rocco, perhaps through humility, perhaps through apprehension of what the immediate future might bring, kept silence.

"Make up your mind to stay here, my son," continued he. "I know very well, believe me, there is not another place as fortunate as this in the whole diocese."

"Well, as for me! . . ." began Don Rocco.

Professor Marin stopped.

"By the way!" said he, "Countess Carlotta has spoken to me. Look here, Don Rocco! I really hope that you will not be foolish!"

Don Rocco gazed savagely at his feet.

"Goodness!" continued the professor. "Sometimes the countess is impossible, but this time, my dear son, she is right. You know that I speak frankly. You are the only one here who does not know these things. It is a scandal, my son! The whole village cries out against it."

"I have never heard, I have not . . ." mumbled Don Rocco.

"Now I tell you of it myself! and the countess has told you more than once."

"You know what I answered her last night?"

"They were absurd things that you said to her."

At this blow Don Rocco shook himself a little, and with his eyes still lowered spoke up eagerly in his own defence.

"I answered according to my convictions, and now I cannot change."

He was humble-hearted, but here was a question of justice and truth. To speak according to truth,

according to what one believes to be the truth, is a duty; therefore, why did they persecute him?

"You cannot change?" said the professor, bending over him and fixing on his face two squinting eyes. "You cannot change?"

Don Rocco kept silent.

The professor straightened up and started on his walk again.

"Very well," he said, with ostentatious quiet. "You are at liberty to do so."

He suddenly turned to Don Rocco, who was following him with heavy steps.

"Gracious!" he exclaimed with annoyance, "do you really think that you have in your house a regular saint? Do you take no account of the gossip, of the scandal? To go against the whole country, to go against those who give you your living, to go against your own good, against Providence, for that creature? Really, if I did not know you, my dear Don Rocco, I would not know what to think."

Don Rocco squirmed, winking furiously, as if he were fighting against secret anguish, and breathless, as if words were trying to break forth involuntarily.

"I cannot change; it is just that," said he when he got through his grimaces. "I cannot."

"But why, in the name of heaven?"

"Because I cannot, conscientiously."

Don Rocco finally raised his eyes. "I have

already told the countess that I cannot go against justice."

"What justice! Your justice is blind, my dear. Blind, deaf, and bald. And if you said a foolish thing yesterday do you wish to repeat it again to-day? And if you do not believe what is said of Lucia are there lacking reasons for sending away a servant? Send her away because she does not take the spots off your coat, because she does not darn your stockings. Anything! Send her away because she cooks your macaroni without sauce, and your squash without salt."

"The real reason would always be the other one," answered Don Rocco gloomily.

Even Professor Marin could not easily answer an argument of this kind. He could only mumble between his teeth: "Holy Virgin, what a pig-head!"

They reached the few consumptive cypresses along the ridge that led from the hill to another still higher hill. There they stopped again; and the professor, who was fond of Don Rocco on account of his simple goodness, and also because he could make him the butt of amiable banter, made him sit down by his side on the grass, and attempted a final argument, seeking in every way to extract from him his reasons for continuing so long to believe in the innocence of Lucia; but he did not succeed in getting at any result. Don Rocco kept always referring to what he had

said the evening before to Countess Carlotta, and repeated that he could not change.

"Then, good-bye St. Luke, my son," said the resigned Marin.

Don Rocco began to wink furiously, but said not a word.

"The Countess Carlotta was expecting you to-day," said the professor, "but you did not go to her. She therefore charged me to tell you that if you did not immediately consent to send away Lucia on the first of December, you will be free for the new year, and even before if you wish."

"I cannot leave before Christmas," said Don Rocco timidly. "The parish priest always needs assistance at that time."

The professor smiled.

"What do you suppose?" said he. "That Countess Carlotta has n't a priest ready and waiting? Think it over, for there is still time."

Don Rocco communed with himself. It rarely happened that he went through so rapid a process of reasoning. Granted, that this woman was a cause for scandal in the country, and that the countess had another priest at her disposal, the decision to be taken was obvious.

"Then," he answered, "I will leave as soon as possible. My father and my sister were to come and visit me one of these days. So that now it will be I who will visit them instead."

He even had in his heart the idea of taking

this woman away from the village with him. His people had no need of a servant, and he, if he delayed finding a place, would not be able to keep her. But certain reasonable ideas, certain necessary things, never reached his heart, and reached his head very late, and when they did Don Rocco would either give himself a knock on the forehead, or a scratch behind, as if it bothered him.

In returning to St. Luke the professor told how the police were in search of the Moro, who was suspected as an accomplice in a recent highway murder, certain authors of which had fallen that very morning into the hands of justice. Don Rocco heard this not without satisfaction; for he now was able to explain why the man had not come. "Who knows," he made bold to say, "that he may not have gone away, and that he may not return? And then all this gossip will come to an end. Do you not think so?"

"Yes, my dear," answered the professor, who understood the point of his discourse, "but you know the Countess Carlotta. Henceforth whether the Moro goes or remains is of no consequence to her. Lucia must be dismissed."

Don Rocco said no more, neither did the professor. The former accompanied the latter as far as the church cypresses, stood looking after him until he disappeared at the end of the lane, and then returned, sighing, to his house.

Later, when, bending under the weight of his cloak, he was passing, lamp in hand, through the entry leading to the choir of St. Luke, his doubt of the previous night came up again violently. "Had it really been a confession?" He stopped in the shadow of the deserted entry, looking at the lamp, giving vent for a moment to the sweet, tempting thoughts of the inert spirit. "Were he to take some pretext to send the woman away, to live and die in peace in his St. Luke." All at once his heart began to beat fiercely. These were thoughts from the devil. In the same way as perhaps in ancient times and in the same place some monk, tormented by heated nocturnal visions of love and of pleasure, may have done, Don Rocco made hastily the sign of the cross, hastened to the choir, and became immersed in a devout reading of the prayer-book.

V.

Ten days after, at the same hour, Don Rocco was praying before the altar of the Virgin, under the pulpit.

He was on the eve of leaving St. Luke for ever. He had agreed with the Countess Carlotta to give as an excuse a brief absence, a visit of a couple of weeks to his old father; and to write afterwards that for family reasons he could not return, and then this had happened that the poor

old peasant, before learning of the new state of affairs, had written, asking for assistance; and Don Rocco had been obliged to sell some furniture as well to save cost of transportation as in order not to arrive home with empty hands. He was returning with the intention of remaining as short a time as possible, and of going away as chaplain wherever it pleased the Curia to which he had directed his request.

No certain information had been secured, either of the wine or of the thieves; but suspicions were rife against a woman who kept an inn, a new favorite of the Moro, who was thought to have received the wine. The Moro was said by some to have fled, by others to have gone into hiding. It seemed as if the police were of the second opinion. They came and went, searching everywhere, but always uselessly.

Lucia had returned, and for several days had behaved in an unusual and peculiar manner. She neglected her work, was brusque with her master, and wept without apparent motive. One evening she went out, saying that she intended going to the parish church to say her prayers. At nine o'clock Don Rocco, as she had not returned, went philosophically to bed, and never knew at what time she came into the house. On the contrary, he congratulated himself the next day on the happy change that had taken place in her, owing to her religious exercises, because she

seemed no longer as she had been, but was quiet, attentive, active, spoke with satisfaction of the approaching departure, the position which Don Rocco hoped to find for her with a certain archpriest, a friend of his; a promotion for her. She seemed to be possessed of an entirely novel ascetic zeal. As soon as Don Rocco retired for the night, she would go to church to spend there hour after hour.

And now, Don Rocco had taken his last supper in the monastic refectory, was reading his breviary for the last time in the little church of St. Luke, as rustic, simple, and religious as he, from its pavement to the black beams of its roof. His heart was heavy, poor priest, thus to leave his nest without honor; to carry humiliation and bitterness to his father and his sister, whose only hope and pride he was! He had every reason to frown as he looked at his breviary.

When he had finished reading, he took his seat on a bench. It was painful to him to take leave of his church. It was his last evening! He stood there with fixed eyes, his eyelids moving regularly, discouraged, cast down, like a stricken beast awaiting the axe. He had passed some hours of the afternoon among his vines, those planted three years before, which had already given him their first fruit. The large cypresses, the splendid view of the plain and of the other hillsides, inspired him with not a single dream;

his peasant's heart grew tender toward the beautiful vines, the fertile furrows. Though blushing and ashamed of it, he had taken a sprig of a vine and an ear of corn to carry away as mementos. This was his poetry. Of the church he could carry away nothing. But he left there his heart, a little everywhere; on the altar that had witnessed his first exposition of the Gospel, on the ancient altar front that inspired him with devotion as he said Mass, on the beautiful Madonna, whose mantle had been modestly raised around her neck by his care, on the tomb of a bishop to whom, two centuries before, the peace of St. Luke had seemed preferable to worldly splendors. Who could tell whether he would ever have again a church so his own—entirely his own? He could not seem to rise, he felt an inner sense of dissolution, of which he had never dreamed. His eyelids kept on winking as if bidding away importunate tears. In fact, he did not weep, but his little eyes shone more than usual.

At half-past nine Lucia entered the church through the choir to look after her master. "I am coming at once, at once, go back," said Don Rocco.

He believed himself alone in the church, but had he bent his head back he might have seen something unusual. Very slowly a human head showed itself in the pulpit by the light of the petroleum lamp and looked down upon the priest.

It had the diabolic eyes of the Moro set in a shaven ecclesiastical face. The head rose up in the shadow, two long arms made in the air a violent gesture of impatience. At the same time Don Rocco repeated to the woman who stood hesitating: "Go back, go back, I am coming at once."

She went out.

Then the priest got up from his bench and went up to the high altar. The human figure in the pulpit came down again, and went rapidly into hiding. Don Rocco turned around so as to stand *in cornu epistolæ*, toward the empty benches, imagined them full of people, of his people of every Sunday, and a spirit of eloquence entered into him.

"I bless you all," said he in a strong voice. "I wish that you were all present, but that is not possible, because I must not let any one know. I bless you all, and ask you to pardon me if I have been wanting. *Gloria Dei cum omnibus vobis.*"

The temptation was too strong for a certain person to resist. A cavernous voice resounded through the empty church:

"Amen."

Don Rocco remained breathless, with his hands in the air.

"Hurry up," said the servant, returning. "Do you not remember that you must leave out your cloak and your clothes?"

Poor Don Rocco was not well found in clothes, for he carried on his back *omnia bona sua*, and there was sewing to be done and spots to be taken out, according to Lucia, before the journey of the next morning. Don Rocco descended from the altar without answering and went all through the church, lowering the lamp between all the benches and confessionals.

"What is it; what are you looking for?" asked the servant, anxiously coming along behind him. For a while Don Rocco did not answer.

"I said a few words of prayer," he said finally, "and I heard some one answer 'Amen.'"

"You fancied so," replied Lucia. "It must have been a trick of the imagination."

"No, no," said Don Rocco. "I really heard the 'Amen.' It seemed to be a voice from under the earth. A great big voice. It did not seem that of a man, but rather of a bull."

"It may have been the bishop," suggested the woman. "Isn't there a bishop buried here? Such things have been heard of."

Don Rocco kept silent. In his simplicity, in his innate disposition to faith, he was inclined to willingly believe anything supernatural, especially if connected with religion. The more astonishing it was, the more did he in sign of reverence knit his brows and drink it in devoutly.

"Now let us go," said the woman. "It is

late, you know, and I have considerable work to do."

"Let us at least recite a *pater*, an *ave*, and a *gloria* to St. Luke," said Don Rocco. "It is the last evening that I say my prayers here. I must leave a salute." He spoke of a *pater*, and an *ave*, and a *gloria;* but he strung along at least a dozen, finding as many reasons to salute other saints of his particular acquaintance. One was to promote the eternal salvation of the two devotees, one their temporal salvation, one the grace to conquer temptations, one a suitable position, one a good death, and another a good journey. The last *pater* was recited by Don Rocco with remarkable fervor for the complete conversion of a sinful soul. Had the priest been less absorbed in his *paters* he might, perhaps, have heard after the fourth or fifth some smothered ejaculations of that humorous bishop who had perpetrated the "Amen." But he heard only Lucia answering him with much devotion, and was touched to the heart by it.

A few moments after he was still meditating, in the dark, in the wretched little bed of his cell, on the salutary and evident effects of the divine grace which he had sought in the sacraments. He meditated also on the action of the Moro, on the ray of light that had shone into that dark conscience, harbinger, if nothing less, of better and lasting light. And in his mystic imagina-

tion he saw the design of Providence which recompensed him for a sacrifice which he had suffered for duty's sake. It was a blessing to think of that, to know that he was losing all his few earthly possessions for such a recompense. He offered up also the sorrow of his father and his sister, his own humiliation, the straitened circumstances in which he should find himself. He saw in front of his bed, through the window, the vague, far-off brightness of the sky, his hope, his end. Little by little his eyes closed, in a delicious sense of confidence and peace. He slept profoundly.

VI.

He was not yet entirely awake when the clock of St. Luke struck half-past seven. Immediately after the bells also rang, because Don Rocco had the day before notified the boy accustomed to serve him at Mass that he would meet him at about eight o'clock. He jumped out of bed, and went to get the clothes that Lucia was to have placed outside the door. Nothing there. He called once, twice, three times. No answer. Perplexed, he returned to his room and called out of the window: "Lucia! Lucia!" Perfect silence. Finally the little sacristan appeared. He had not seen Lucia. He had come to get the keys of the church, had found the gate of

the courtyard open, as well as the door of the house; no one in the kitchen, no one in the sitting-room. Not finding the keys, he had entered the church by the inner entry. Don Rocco sent him to the sitting-room to get his clothes, as it was there that Lucia usually worked in the evening. The boy returned to say that there were no clothes there. "How? There are no clothes?" Don Rocco ordered him to stand on guard before the entrance of the house and went down to look for them himself, in his shirt. Half-way down the stairs he stopped and sniffed. What an abominable odor of pipe was this? Don Rocco, with darkened brow, went on. He went directly to the sitting-room, looked, searched; there was nothing. He returned to the kitchen, his heart beating. A horrid smell, but no clothes. Yes, under the table there was a little pile of soiled things; a jacket, a pair of drawers, a peasant's hat. Don Rocco gathered up, unfolded, and examined them with portentous frowns. It seemed to him that he had seen these things somewhere before. His brain did not yet understand anything, but his heart began to understand and to beat more strongly than before. He took hold of his chin and his cheeks with his left hand, squeezed them hard, trying to squeeze from them the where, the how, and the when. And lo! his eyes rested on the wall, and he finally perceived something there which was not there the day be-

fore. There was written in charcoal on the right: "Many salutations." And on the left:

"The wine is good."

"The servant is good."

"The cloak is good."

"Don Rocco is good."

He read, raised his hand to his head, read again—read again, seemed to lose his eyesight, felt a sensation of cold, of torpidity spreading from his breast throughout his body. Some one called out in the courtyard, "Where is that Don Rocco?" With difficulty he went up to his room again, cast himself on his bed, almost without knowing what he was doing, almost without thought or sensation.

Below they were looking and calling for him. Professor Marin was there, and some few other persons who had come to attend the Mass. No one could understand how the door of the church was still closed. The professor went into the house, called Lucia, called Don Rocco, without receiving any answer. He finally reached the room of the priest and stood still on the door-sill, amazed to see him in bed. "Well," said he, "Don Rocco! in bed? And what about Mass?"

"I cannot," answered Don Rocco in a low voice, immovable on his back like a mummy.

"But what is it?" replied the other, approaching the bed with sincere alarm. "What is the matter with you?"

This troubled face, this affectionate tone, softened poor Don Rocco's heart, petrified by pain and surprise. This time two real tears fell from his palpitating eyelids. His mouth, closed tight, was twisting and trembling, but still resisted. Seeing then that he answered not a word, the professor ran to the stairs and called down that the physician should be sent for.

"No, no," Don Rocco forced himself to say without moving. His voice was filled with sobs. The professor heard him only as he was returning to the bed.

"No?" said he. "But what, then, is the matter? Speak."

Meanwhile three poor women and a beggar, who had come to listen to Mass, entered quite frightened into the room, surrounding the two, and in their turn questioning Don Rocco. He kept silent like a Job, seeking to master himself. Perhaps his annoyance at all these curious faces hanging over his own helped him. "Go away," said he finally to the last comers. "There is no need of the doctor, no need of anything, go away!"

The four faces withdrew somewhat, but continued looking at him fixedly with an expression, perhaps, of increased alarm.

"Go away, I tell you!" continued Don Rocco.

They went out silently and stopped outside to listen and spy.

"Well, then," said the professor, "what are your feelings?"

"Nothing."

"But, then, why are you in bed?"

Don Rocco turned with his face to the wall. The tears were coming back again now. He was unable to speak.

"But in the name of heaven," insisted the professor, "what is it?"

"I am getting over it, I am getting over it," sobbed Don Rocco.

The professor did not know what to do nor what to think. He asked him whether he wanted water, and the old beggar went down at once to get a glassful and gave it to Marin. Don Rocco did not want it in the least, but kept on repeating: "Thanks, thanks, I am getting over it," and drank it obsequiously.

"Well, then?" continued the professor.

"You are right," answered Don Rocco.

"About what?"

"About the woman."

"Lucia? Right! And by the way, where is Lucia? Not here? Run away?"

Don Rocco nodded. Marin looked at him stupefied and repeating, "Run away? Run away?" The other four came back into the room echoing, "Run away? Run away?"

"But listen!" said the professor. "Are you staying in bed for this reason? Are you humili-

ating yourself in this way? Come on and get dressed."

Don Rocco looked at him, reddened up to the top of his head, narrowed his tear-wet eyes in a smile, which meant: "Now it will be your turn to laugh."

"I have no clothes," he said.

"What?"

The professor added to this word a gesture which meant, "Did she carry them away?" Don Rocco responded also by a mere nod; and seeing that his friend with difficulty restrained a burst of laughter, he also tried to laugh.

"Poor Don Rocco," said the professor, and added, still with a laugh in his throat, heartfelt words of sympathy, of comfort, and asked for every detail of what had happened. "Oh, if you had only listened to me!" he concluded. "If you had only sent her away!"

"Yes," said Don Rocco, accepting even this with humiliation. "You are right. And now what will the countess say?"

The professor sighed.

"What can I say, my son? She will say nothing. This also has happened, that your successor wrote yesterday that he had definitively gotten rid of his present engagements and was at the disposal of the countess."

Don Rocco was silent, heart-broken. "I must look at the time," said he, after a moment's

silence, "because at half-past nine they will come here with a horse to take me away. It will be necessary to ask the archpriest or the chaplain to lend me a suit of clothes."

"Let me, let me!" exclaimed the professor, full of zeal. "I will go home and send it to you immediately. You will give it back to me at your leisure, when you are able." A lively gratitude cleared the face and moved the eyelids of Don Rocco.

"Thanks!" said he, fixing his eyes humbly on the end of his nose. "Thank you very much!"

"Body of Bacchus!" he added to himself, as the professor was going down the stairs. "He is a span higher than I am, that just occurs to me!"

But it certainly did not occur to him to call him back.

VII.

At half-past nine Don Rocco appeared in the doorway of his house to start on his exodus. The overcoat of the professor danced around his heels and swallowed up his hands down to his finger tips. The stove-pipe hat, of enormous size, came down to his ears. The professor followed right behind him, laughing silently. In the courtyard some people attracted by the report of what had happened were laughing. "Oh,

Don Rocco, see what he looks like!" said the women. And one of them would tell him about some action of Lucia, and another about another, things of all kinds which he had never suspected. "Enough, enough," he answered, disturbed in his conscience at all this malicious gossip. "It is now all over, all over."

He went on, followed by them all, gave a last look at the fig tree near the bell-tower, and passing between the cypresses in front of the church, turned back toward the door, devoutly raised his hat, and bent his knee.

The little wagon was awaiting him on the main road. The driver, seeing him in this costume, laughed no less heartily than the rest.

Then Don Rocco took leave of all, again thanked the professor, sent his respects to the countess, and reduced to silence those who were still heaping abuse on Lucia. When he had taken his seat the beggar approached him and put his right hand upon one of his shoes. "Is this yours?" said he.

"Yes, yes, the shoes are," answered the priest with a certain satisfaction, as the horse started.

The beggar carried to his forehead the hand that had touched the shoe of Don Rocco, and said with solemnity:

"*In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*"

SAN PANTALEONE

BY

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

The Translation by George McLean Harper.

SAN PANTALEONE

BY GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

I.

THE great sandy piazza glittered as if strewn with powdered pumice. Its whitewashed houses held a strange metallic glow, like the walls of an immense furnace cooling off. The glare of the clouds, reflected from the stone pillars of the church at its far end, gave them the appearance of red granite. The church windows blazed as with inward fire. The sacred images had assumed life-like colors and attitudes, and the massive edifice seemed lifted now, in the splendor of the new celestial phenomenon, to a prouder domination than ever, above the houses of Radusa.

Groups of men and women, gesticulating and talking loudly, were pouring from the streets into the square. Superstitious terror grew in leaps and bounds from face to face. A thousand awful images of divine punishment rose out of their rude fancies; and comments, eager disputes, plaintive appeals, wild stories, prayers,

and cries were mingled in a deep uproar, as of a hurricane approaching. For some time past this bloody redness of the sky had lasted through the night, disturbing its tranquillity, illumining sullenly the sleeping fields, and making dogs howl.

"Giacobbe! Giacobbe!" shouted some, waving their arms, who till then had stood in a compact band around a pillar of the church portico, talking in low tones, "Giacobbe!"

There came out through the main door, and drew near to those who called him, a long, emaciated man, apparently consumptive, whose head was bald at the top, but had a crown of long reddish hair about the temples and above the nape of the neck. His little sunken eyes, animated with the fire of a deep passion, were set close and had no particular color. The absence of his two upper front teeth gave to his mouth when speaking, and to his sharp chin with its few scattered hairs, the strangeness of a senile faun. The rest of his body was a wretched structure of bones ill-concealed by his clothes. The skin on his hands, his wrists, the back of his arms, and his breast was full of blue punctures made with a pin and india-ink, the souvenirs of sanctuaries visited, pardons obtained, and vows performed.

When the fanatic approached the group at the pillar, a swarm of questions arose from the anx-

ious men. "Well, then? what did Don Cónsolo say? Will they send out only the silver arm? Would not the whole bust do better? When would Pallura come back with the candles? Was it one hundred pounds of wax? Only one hundred? And when would the bells begin to ring? Well, then? Well, then?"

The clamor increased around Giacobbe. Those on the outskirts of the crowd pushed toward the church. From all the streets people poured into the square till they filled it. And Giacobbe kept answering his questions, whispering, as if revealing dreadful secrets and bringing prophecies from far. He had seen aloft in the bloody sky a threatening hand, and then a black veil, and then a sword and a trumpet.

"Go ahead! Go ahead!" they urged him, looking in each other's faces, and seized with a strange desire to hear of marvels, while the wonder grew from mouth to mouth in the crowd.

II.

The vast crimson zone rose slowly from the horizon to the zenith and bade fair to cover the whole vault of heaven. An undulating vapor of molten metal seemed pouring down on the roofs of the town; and in the descending crepuscule yellow and violet rays flashed through a trembling and iridescent glow. One long streak

brighter than the others pointed towards a street which opened on the river-front, and at the end of this street the water flamed away between the tall slim poplar-trunks, and beyond the stream lay a strip of luxuriant country, from which the old Saracen towers stood out confusedly, like stone islets, in the dark. The air was full of the stifling emanations of mown hay, with now and then a whiff from putrefied silkworms in the bushes. Flights of swallows crossed this space with quick, scolding cries, trafficking between the river sands and the eaves.

An expectant silence had interrupted the murmur of the multitude. The name Pallura ran from lip to lip. Signs of angry impatience broke forth here and there. The wagon was not yet to be seen along the river-road; the candles had not come; Don Cónsolo therefore was delaying the exposition of the relics and the acts of exorcism; the danger still threatened. Panic fear invaded the hearts of all those people crowded together like a flock of sheep, and no longer venturing to raise their eyes to heaven. The women burst out sobbing, and at the sound of weeping every mind was oppressed and filled with consternation.

Then at last the bells began to ring. As they were hung low, their deep quivering strokes seemed to graze the heads of the people, and a sort of continuous wailing filled the intervals.

"San Pantaleone! San Pantaleone!"

It was an immense, unanimous cry of desperate men imploring aid. Kneeling, with blanched faces and outstretched hands, they supplicated.

"San Pantaleone!"

Then, at the church door, in the midst of the smoke of two censers, Don Cónsolo appeared, resplendent in a violet chasuble, with gold embroidery. He held aloft the sacred arm of silver, and conjured the air, shouting the Latin words:

"*Ut fidelibus tuis æris serenitatem concedere digneris. Te rogamus, audi nos.*"

At sight of the relic the multitude went delirious with affectionate joy. Tears ran from all eyes, and through glistening tears these eyes beheld a miraculous gleam emanate from the three fingers held up as if in the act of benediction. The arm appeared larger now, in the enkindled air.

The dim light awoke strange scintillations in the precious stones. The balsamic odor of incense spread quickly to the nostrils of the devotees.

"*Te rogamus, audi nos!*"

But when the arm was carried back and the tolling stopped, in that moment of silence a tinkling of little bells was heard near at hand coming from the river road. Then of a sudden the crowd rushed in that direction and many voices cried:

"It is Pallura with the candles! It is Pallura coming! Here 's Pallura!"

The wagon came screeching over the gravel, drawn at a walk by a heavy gray mare, over whose shoulders hung a great shining brass horn, like a half-moon. When Giacobbe and the others made towards her, the pacific animal stopped and breathed hard. Giacobbe, who reached the wagon first, saw stretched out on its floor the bloody body of Pallura, and screamed, waving his arms towards the crowd, "He is dead! He is dead!"

III.

The sad news spread like lightning. People crowded around the wagon, and craned their necks to see, thinking no longer of the threats in the sky, because struck by the unexpected happening and filled with that natural ferocious curiosity which the sight of blood awakens.

"He is dead? What killed him?"

Pallura lay on his back upon the boards, with a broad wound in the middle of his forehead, with one ear torn, with gashes on his arms, his sides, and one thigh. A warm stream flowed down to his chin and neck, staining his shirt and forming dark, shining clots on his breast, his leathern belt, and even his breeches. Giacobbe hung over the body; all the rest waited around

him; an auroral flush lighted up their perplexed faces; and at that moment of silence, from the river-bank arose the song of the frogs, and bats skimmed back and forth above the heads of the crowd.

Suddenly Giacobbe, straightening up, with one cheek bloody, cried:

"He is not dead. He still breathes."

A hollow murmur ran through the crowd, and the nearest strained forward to look. The anxiety of those at a distance commenced to break into clamor. Two women brought a jug of water, another some strips of linen. A youth held out a gourd full of wine.

The wounded man's face was washed; the flow of blood from his forehead was checked; his head was raised. Then voices inquired loudly the cause of this deed. The hundred pounds of wax were missing; only a few fragments of candles remained in the cracks of the wagon-bed.

In the commotion their minds grew more and more inflamed, exasperated, and contentious. And as an old hereditary hatred burned in them against the town of Mascálico, on the opposite bank of the river, Giacobbe said venomously, in a hoarse voice:

"What if the candles have been offered to San Gonselvo?"

It was like the first flash of a conflagration!

The spirit of church-rivalry awoke all at once in these people brutalized by many years of blind, savage worship of their own one idol. The fanatic's words flew from mouth to mouth. And beneath the tragic dull-red sky, the raging multitude resembled a tribe of mutinous gypsies.

The name of the saint broke from all throats, like a war-cry. The most excited hurled curses towards the river, and waved their arms and shook their fists. Then all these faces blazing with anger, and reddened also by the unusual light,—all these faces, broad and massive, to which their gold ear-rings and thick overhanging hair gave a wild, barbaric character,—all these faces turned eagerly towards the man lying there, and grew soft with pity. Women, with pious care, tried to bring him back to life. Loving hands changed the cloths on his wounds, sprinkled water in his face, set the gourd of wine to his lips, made a sort of pillow under his head.

"Pallura, poor Pallura, won't you answer?"

He lay supine, his eyes closed, his mouth half open, with brown soft hair on his cheeks and chin, the gentle beauty of youth still showing in his features contracted with pain. From beneath the bandage on his forehead a mere thread of blood trickled down over his temples; at the corners of his mouth stood little beads of pale red foam, and from his throat issued a faint

broken hiss, like the sound of a sick man gargling. About him attentions, questions, feverish glances multiplied. The mare from time to time shook her head and neighed in the direction of the houses. An atmosphere as of an impending hurricane hung over the whole town.

Then from the square rang out the screams of a woman, of a mother. They seemed all the louder for the sudden hushing of all other voices, and an enormous woman, suffocated in her fat, broke through the crowd and hurried to the wagon, crying aloud. Being heavy and unable to climb into it, she seized her son's feet, with sobbing words of love, with such sharp broken cries and such a terribly comic expression of grief, that all the bystanders shuddered and averted their faces.

"Zaccheo! Zaccheo! My heart, my joy!" screamed the widow unceasingly, kissing the feet of the wounded man and dragging him to her towards the ground.

The wounded man stirred, his mouth was contorted by a spasm, but although he opened his eyes and looked up, they were veiled with damp, so that he could not see. Big tears began to well forth at the corners of his eyelids and roll down over his cheeks and neck. His mouth was still awry. A vain effort to speak was betrayed by the hoarse whistling in his throat. And the crowd pressed closer, saying:

"Speak, Pallura! Who hurt you? Who hurt you? Speak! Speak!"

Beneath this question was a trembling rage, an intensifying fury, a deep tumult of reawakened feelings of vengeance; and the hereditary hatred boiled in every heart.

"Speak! Who hurt you? Tell us! Tell us!"

The dying man opened his eyes again; and as they were holding his hands tightly, perhaps this warm living contact gave him a momentary strength, for his gaze quickened and a vague stammering sound came to his lips. The words were not yet distinguishable. The panting breath of the multitude could be heard through the silence. Their eyes had an inward flame, because all expected one single word.

"Ma—Ma—Mascálico—"

"Mascálico! Mascálico!" shrieked Giacobbe, who was bending over him, with ear intent to snatch the weak syllables from his dying lips.

An immense roar greeted the cry. The multitude swayed at first as if tempest-swept. Then, when a voice, dominating the tumult, gave the order of attack, the mob broke up in haste. A single thought drove these men forward, a thought which seemed to have been stamped by lightning upon all minds at once: to arm themselves with some weapon. Towering above the conscious-

ness of all arose a sort of bloody fatality, beneath the great tawny glare of the heavens, and in the electric odor emanating from the anxious fields.

IV.

And the phalanx, armed with scythes, bill-hooks, axes, hoes, and guns, reunited in the square before the church. And all cried: "San Pantaleone!"

Don Cónsolo, terrified by the din, had taken refuge in a stall behind the altar. A handful of fanatics, led by Giacobbe, made their way into the principal chapel, forced the bronze grille, and went into the underground chamber where the bust of the saint was kept. Three lamps, fed with olive oil, burned softly in the damp air of the sacristy, where in a glass case the Christian idol glittered, with its white head surrounded by a broad gilt halo; and the walls were hidden under the wealth of native offerings.

When the idol, borne on the shoulders of four herculean men, appeared at last between the pillars and shone in the auroral light, a long gasp of passion ran through the waiting crowd, and a quiver of joy passed like a breath of wind over all their faces. And the column moved away, the enormous head of the saint oscillating above, with its empty eye-sockets turned to the front.

Now through the sky, in the deep, diffused

glow, brighter meteors ploughed their furrows; groups of thin clouds broke away from the hem of the vapor zone and floated off, dissolving slowly. The whole town of Radusa stood out like a smouldering mountain of ashes. Behind and before, as far as eye could reach, the country lay in an indistinctly lucent mass. A great singing of frogs filled the sonorous solitude.

On the river-road Pallura's wagon blocked the way. It was empty, but still soiled, here and there, with blood. Angry curses broke suddenly from the mob. Giacobbe shouted:

"Let us put the saint in it!"

So the bust was placed in the wagon-bed and drawn by many arms into the ford. The battle-line thus crossed the frontier. Metallic gleams ran along the files. The parted water broke in luminous spray, and the current flamed away red between the poplars, in the distance, towards the quadrangular towers. Mascálico showed itself on a little hill, among olive trees, asleep. The dogs were barking here and there, with a persistent fury of reply. The column, issuing from the ford, left the public road and advanced rapidly straight across country. The silver bust was borne again on men's shoulders, and towered above their heads amid the tall, odorous grain, starred with bright fireflies.

Suddenly a shepherd in his straw hut, where

he lay to guard the grain, seized with mad panic at sight of so many armed men, started to run up the hill, yelling, "Help! Help!" And his screams echoed in the olive grove.

Then it was that the Radusani charged. Among tree-trunks and dry reeds the silver saint tottered, ringing as he struck low branches, and glittering momentarily at every steep place in the path. Ten, twelve, twenty guns, in a vibrating flash, rattled their shot against the mass of houses. Crashes, then cries, were heard; then a great commotion. Doors were opened; others were slammed shut. Window-panes fell shattered. Vases fell from the church and broke on the street. In the track of the assailants a white smoke rose quietly up through the incandescent air. They all, blinded and in bestial rage, cried, "Kill! kill!"

A group of fanatics remained about San Pantaleone. Atrocious insults for San Gonselvo broke out amid waving scythes and brandished hooks:

"Thief! Thief! Beggar! The candles! The candles!"

Other bands took the houses by assault, breaking down the doors with hatchets. And as they fell, unhinged and shivered, San Pantaleone's followers leaped in, howling, to kill the defenders.

The women, half-naked, took refuge in corners,

imploring pity. They warded off the blows, grasping the weapons and cutting their fingers. They rolled at full length on the floor, amid heaps of blankets and sheets.

Giacobbe, long, quick, red as a Turkish scimitar, led the persecution, stopping ever and anon to make sweeping imperious gestures over the heads of the others with a great scythe. Pallid, bare-headed, he held the van, in the name of San Pantaleone. More than thirty men followed him. They all had a dull, confused sense of walking through a conflagration, over quaking ground, and beneath a blazing vault ready to crumble.

But from all sides began to come the defenders, the Mascalicesi, strong and dark as mulattos, sanguinary foes, fighting with long spring-bladed knives, and aiming at the belly and the throat, with guttural cries at every blow.

The mêlée rolled away, step by step, towards the church. From the roofs of two or three houses flames were already bursting. A horde of women and children, wan-eyed and terror-stricken, were fleeing headlong among the olive trees. Then the hand-to-hand struggle between the males, unimpeded by tears and lamentations, became more concentrated and ferocious.

Under the rust-colored sky, the ground was strewn with corpses. Broken imprecations were

hissed through the teeth of the wounded; and steadily, through all the clamor, still came the cry of the Radusani:

"The candles! The candles!"

But the enormous church door of oak, studded with nails, remained barred. The Mascalicesi defended it against the pushing crowd and the axes. The white, impassive silver saint oscillated in the thick of the fight, still upheld on the shoulders of the four giants, who refused to fall, though bleeding from head to foot. It was the supreme desire of the assailants to place their idol on the enemy's altar.

Now while the Mascalicesi fought like lions, performing prodigies on the stone steps, Giacobbe suddenly disappeared around the corner of the building, seeking an undefended opening through which to enter the sacristy. And beholding a narrow window not far from the ground, he climbed up to it, wedged himself into its embrasure, doubled up his long body, and succeeded in crawling through. The cordial aroma of incense floated in the solitude of God's house. Feeling his way in the dark, guided by the roar of the fight outside, he crept towards the door, stumbling against chairs and bruising his face and hands.

The furious thunder of the Radusan axes was echoing from the tough oak, when he began to force the lock with an iron bar, panting, suf-

focated by a violent agonizing palpitation which diminished his strength, blind, giddy, stiffened by the pain of his wounds, and dripping with tepid blood.

"San Pantaleone! San Pantaleone!" bellowed the hoarse voices of his comrades outside, redoubling their blows as they felt the door slowly yield. Through the wood came to his ears the heavy thump of falling bodies, the quick thud of knife-thrusts nailing some one through the back. And a grand sentiment, like the divine uplift of the soul of a hero saving his country, flamed up then in that bestial beggar's heart.

V.

By a final effort the door was flung open. The Radusani rushed in, with an immense howl of victory, across the bodies of the dead, to carry the silver saint to the altar. A vivid quivering light was reflected suddenly into the obscure nave, making the golden candlesticks shine, and the organ-pipes above. And in that yellow glow, which now came from the burning houses and now disappeared again, a second battle was fought. Bodies grappled together and rolled over the brick floor, never to rise, but to bound hither and thither in the contortions of rage, to strike the benches, and die under them, or on the chapel

steps, or against the taper-spikes about the confessionals. Under the peaceful vault of God's house the chilling sound of iron penetrating men's flesh or sliding along their bones, the single broken groan of men struck in a vital spot, the crushing of skulls, the roar of victims unwilling to die, the atrocious hilarity of those who had succeeded in killing an enemy,—all this re-echoed distinctly. And a sweet, faint odor of incense floated above the strife.

The silver idol had not, however, reached the altar in triumph, for a hostile circle stood between. Giacobbe fought with his scythe, and, though wounded in several places, did not yield a hand's breadth of the stair which he had been the first to gain. Only two men were left to hold up the saint, whose enormous white head heaved and reeled grotesquely like a drunken mask. The men of Mascálico were growing furious.

Then San Pantaleone fell on the pavement, with a sharp, vibrant ring. As Giacobbe dashed forward to pick him up, a big devil of a man dealt him a blow with a bill-hook, which stretched him out on his back. Twice he rose and twice was struck down again. Blood covered his face, his breast, his hands, yet he persisted in getting up. Enraged by this ferocious tenacity of life, three, four, five clumsy peasants together stabbed him furiously in the belly, and the fanatic fell

over, with the back of his neck against the silver bust. He turned like a flash and put his face against the metal, with his arms outspread and his legs drawn up. And San Pantaleone was lost.

IT SNOWS

BY

ENRICO CASTELNUOVO

The Translation by Edith Wharton.

IT SNOWS

BY ENRICO CASTELNUOVO

THE thermometer marks barely one degree above freezing, the sky is covered with ominous white clouds, the air is harsh and piercing; what can induce Signor Odoardo, at nine o'clock on such a morning, to stand in his study window? It is true that Signor Odoardo is a vigorous man, in the prime of life, but it is never wise to tempt Providence by needlessly risking one's health. But stay—I begin to think that I have found a clue to his conduct. Opposite Signor Odoardo's window is the window of the Signora Evelina, and Signora Evelina has the same tastes as Signor Odoardo. She too is taking the air, leaning against the window-sill in her dressing-gown, her fair curls falling upon her forehead and tossed back every now and then by a pretty movement of her head. The street is so narrow that it is easy to talk across from one side to the other, but in such weather as this the only two windows that stand open are those of Signora Evelina and Signor Odoardo.

There is no denying the fact: Signora Evelina, who within the last few weeks has taken up her abode across the way, is a very fascinating little widow. Her hair is of spun gold, her skin of milk and roses, her little turned-up nose, though assuredly not Grecian, is much more attractive than if it were; she has the most dazzling teeth in the most kissable mouth; her eyes are transparent as a cloudless sky, and—well, she knows how to use them. Nor is this the sum total of her charms: look at the soft, graceful curves of her agile, well-proportioned figure; look at her little hands and feet! After all, one can hardly wonder that Signor Odoardo runs the risk of catching his death of cold, instead of closing the window and warming himself at the stove which roars so cheerfully within. It is rather at Signora Evelina that I wonder; for, though Signor Odoardo is not an ill-looking man, he is close upon forty, while she is but twenty-four. So young, and already a widow—poor Signora Evelina! It is true that she has great strength of character; but six months have elapsed since her husband's death, and she is resigned to it already, though the deceased left her barely enough to keep body and soul together. Happily Signora Evelina is not encumbered with a family; she is alone and independent, and with those eyes, that hair, that little upturned nose, she ought to have no

difficulty in finding a second husband. In fact, there is no harm in admitting that Signora Evelina has contemplated the possibility of a second marriage, and that if the would-be bridegroom is not in his first youth—why, she is prepared to make the best of it. In this connection it is perhaps not uninstructive to note that Signor Odoardo is in comfortable circumstances, and is himself a widower. What a coincidence!

Well, then, why don't they marry—that being the customary *dénouement* in such cases?

Why don't they marry? Well—Signor Odoardo is still undecided. If there had been any hope of a love-affair I fear that his indecision would have vanished long ago. *Errare humanum est.* But Signora Evelina is a woman of serious views; she is in search of a husband, not of a flirtation. Signora Evelina is a person of great determination; she knows how to turn other people's heads without letting her own be moved a jot. Signora Evelina is deep; deep enough, surely, to gain her point. If Signor Odoardo flutters about her much longer he will singe his wings; things cannot go on in this way. Signor Odoardo's visits are too frequent; and now, in addition, there are the conversations from the window. It is time for a decisive step to be taken, and Signor Odoardo is afraid that he may find himself taking the step before he is

prepared to; this very day, perhaps, when he goes to call on the widow.

The door of Signor Odoardo's study is directly opposite the window in which he is standing, and the opening of this door is therefore made known to him by a violent draught.

As he turns a sweet voice says:

"Good-bye, papa dear; I 'm going to school."

"Good-bye, Doretta," he answers, stooping to kiss a pretty little maid of eight or nine; and at the same instant Signora Evelina calls out from over the way:

"Good-morning, Doretta!"

Doretta, who had made a little grimace on discovering her papa in conversation with his pretty neighbor, makes another as she hears herself greeted, and mutters reluctantly, "Good-morning."

Then, with her little basket on her arm, she turns away slowly to join the maid-servant who is waiting for her in the hall.

"I am *so* fond of that child," sighs Signora Evelina, with the sweetest inflexion in her voice, "but she does n't like me at all!"

"What an absurd idea! . . . Doretta is a very self-willed child."

Thus Signor Odoardo; but in his heart of hearts he too is convinced that his little daughter has no fondness for Signora Evelina.

Meanwhile, the cold is growing more intense,

and every now and then a flake of snow spins around upon the wind. Short of wishing to be frozen stiff, there is nothing for it but to shut the window.

"It snows," says Signora Evelina, glancing upward.

"Oh, it was sure to come."

"Well—I must go and look after my household. *Au revoir*—shall I see you later?"

"I hope to have the pleasure—"

"*Au revoir*, then."

Signora Evelina closes the window, nods and smiles once more through the pane, and disappears.

Signor Odoardo turns back to his study, and perceiving how cold it has grown, throws some wood on the fire, and, kneeling before the door of the stove, tries to blow the embers into a blaze. The flames leap up with a merry noise, sending bright flashes along the walls of the room.

Outside, the flakes continue to descend at intervals. Perhaps, after all, it is not going to be a snowstorm.

Signor Odoardo paces up and down the room, with bent head and hands thrust in his pockets. He is disturbed, profoundly disturbed. He feels that he has reached a crisis in his life; that in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, his future will be decided. Is he seriously in love with Signora

Evelina? How long has he known her? Will she be sweet and good like *the other?* Will she know how to be a mother to Doretta?

There is a sound of steps in the hall; Signor Odoardo pauses in the middle of the room. The door re-opens, and Doretta rushes up to her father, her cheeks flushed, her hood falling over her forehead, her warm coat buttoned up to her chin, her hands thrust into her muff.

"It is snowing and the teacher has sent us home."

She tosses off her hood and coat and goes up to the stove.

"There is a good fire, but the room is cold," she exclaims.

As a matter of fact, the window having stood open for half an hour, the thermometer indicates but fifty degrees.

"Papa," Doretta goes on, "I want to stay with you all day long to-day."

"And suppose your poor daddy has affairs of his own to attend to?"

"No, no, you must give them up for to-day."

And Doretta, without waiting for an answer, runs to fetch her books, her doll, and her work. The books are spread out on the desk, the doll is comfortably seated on the sofa, and the work is laid out upon a low stool.

"Ah," she cries, with an air of importance, "what a mercy that there is no school to-day!

I shall have time to go over my lesson. Oh, look how it snows!"

It snows indeed. First a white powder, fine but thick, and whirled in circles by the wind, beats with a dry metallic sound against the window-panes; then the wind drops, and the flakes, growing larger, descend silently, monotonously, incessantly. The snow covers the streets like a downy carpet, spreads itself like a sheet over the roofs, fills up the cracks in the walls, heaps itself upon the window-sills, envelops the iron window-bars, and hangs in festoons from the gutters and eaves.

Out of doors it must be as cold as ever, but the room is growing rapidly warmer, and Doretta, climbing on a chair, has the satisfaction of announcing that the mercury has risen eleven degrees.

"Yes, dear," her father replies, "and the clock is striking eleven too. Run and tell them to get breakfast ready."

Doretta runs off obediently, but reappears in a moment.

"Daddy, daddy, what do you suppose has happened? The dining-room stove won't draw, and the room is all full of smoke!"

"Then let us breakfast here, child."

This excellent suggestion is joy to the soul of Doretta, who hastens to carry the news to the kitchen, and then, in a series of journeys back

and forth from the dining-room to the study, transports with her own hands the knives, forks, plates, tablecloth, and napkins, and, with the man-servant's aid, lays them out upon one of her papa's tables. How merry she is! How completely the cloud has vanished that darkened her brow a few hours earlier! And how well she acquits herself of her household duties!

Signor Odoardo, watching her with a sense of satisfaction, cannot resist exclaiming: "Bravo, Doretta!"

Doretta is undeniably the very image of her mother. She too was just such an excellent housekeeper, a model of order, of neatness, of propriety. And she was pretty, like Doretta, even though she did not possess the fair hair and captivating eyes of Signora Evelina.

The man-servant who brings in the breakfast is accompanied by a newcomer, the cat Melanio, who is always present at Doretta's meals. The cat Melanio is old; he has known Doretta ever since she was born, and he honors her with his protection. Every morning he mews at her door, as though to inquire if she has slept well; every evening he keeps her company until it is time for her to go to bed. Whenever she goes out he speeds her with a gentle purr; whenever he hears her come in he hurries to meet her and rubs himself against her legs. In the morning, and at the midday meal, when she takes it at

home, he sits beside her chair and silently waits for the scraps from her plate. The cat Melanio, however, is not in the habit of visiting Signor Odoardo's study, and shows a certain surprise at finding himself there. Signor Odoardo, for his part, receives his new guest with some diffidence; but Doretta, intervening in Melanio's favor, undertakes to answer for his good conduct.

It is long since Doretta has eaten with so much appetite. When she has finished her breakfast, she clears the table as deftly and promptly as she had laid it, and in a few moments Signor Odoardo's study has resumed its wonted appearance. Only the cat Melanio remains, comfortably established by the stove, on the understanding that he is to be left there as long as he is not troublesome.

The continual coming and going has made the room grow colder. The mercury has dropped perceptibly, and Doretta, to make it rise again, empties nearly the whole wood-basket into the stove.

How it snows, how it snows! No longer in detached flakes, but as though an openwork white cloth were continuously unrolled before one's eyes. Signor Odoardo begins to think that it will be impossible for him to call on Signora Evelina. True, it is only a step, but he would sink into the snow up to his knees. After all, it is only twelve o'clock. It may stop snowing later.

Doretta is struck by a luminous thought:

"What if I were to answer grandmamma's letter?"

In another moment Doretta is seated at her father's desk, in his arm-chair, two cushions raising her to the requisite height, her legs dangling into space, the pen suspended in her hand, and her eyes fixed upon a sheet of ruled paper, containing thus far but two words: *Dear Grandmamma.*

Signor Odoardo, leaning against the stove, watches his daughter with a smile.

It appears that at last Doretta has discovered a way of beginning her letter, for she re-plunges the pen into the inkstand, lowers her hand to the sheet of paper, wrinkles her forehead and sticks out her tongue.

After several minutes of assiduous toil she raises her head and asks:

"What shall I say to grandmamma about her invitation to go and spend a few weeks with her?"

"Tell her that you can't go now, but that she may expect you in the spring."

"With you, papa?"

"With me, yes," Signor Odoardo answers mechanically.

Yet if, in the meantime, he engages himself to Signora Evelina, this visit to his mother-in-law will become rather an awkward business.

"There—I 've finished!" Doretta cries with an air of triumph.

But the cry is succeeded by another, half of anguish, half of rage.

"What 's the matter now?"

"A blot!"

"Let me see? . . . You little goose, what *have* you done? . . . You 've ruined the letter now!"

Doretta, having endeavored to remove the ink-spot by licking it, has torn the paper.

"Oh, dear, I shall have to copy it out now," she says, in a mortified tone.

"You can copy it this evening. Bring it here, and let me look at it. . . . Not bad,—not bad at all. A few letters to be added, and a few to be taken out; but, on the whole, for a chit of your size, it 's fairly creditable. Good girl!"

Doretta rests upon her laurels, playing with her doll Nini. She dresses Nini in her best gown, and takes her to call on the cat, Melanio.

The cat, Melanio, who is dozing with half-open eyes, is somewhat bored by these attentions. Raising himself on his four paws, he arches his flexible body, and then rolls himself up into a ball, turning his back upon his visitor.

"Dear me, Melanio is not very polite to-day," says Doretta, escorting the doll back to the sofa. "But you must n't be offended; he 's very seldom impolite. I think it must be the weather;

does n't the weather make you sleepy too, Nini? . . . Come, let 's take a nap; go by-bye, baby, go by-bye."

Nini sleeps. Her head rests upon a cushion, her little rag and horse-hair body is wrapped in a woollen coverlet, her lids are closed; for Nini raises or lowers her lids according to the position of her body.

Signor Odoardo looks at the clock and then glances out of the window. It is two o'clock and the snow is still falling.

Doretta is struck by another idea.

"Daddy, see if I know my La Fontaine fable: *Le corbeau et le renard.*"

"Very well, let 's hear it," Signor Odoardo assents, taking the open book from the little girl's hands.

Doretta begins:

> "*Maître corbeau, sur un arbre perché,*
> *Tenait en son bec un fromage;*
> *Maître . . . maître . . . maître . . .*"

"Go on."

"*Maître . . .*"

"*Maître renard.*"

"Oh, yes, now I remember:

> *Maître renard, par l'odeur alléché,*
> *Lui tint à peu près ce langage:*
> *Hé! bonjour . . .*"

At this point Doretta, seeing that her father is

not listening to her, breaks off her recitation. Signor Odoardo has, in fact, closed the book upon his forefinger, and is looking elsewhere.

"Well, Doretta," he absently inquires, "why don't you go on?"

"I 'm not going to say any more of it," she answers sullenly.

"Why, you cross-patch! What 's the matter?"

The little girl, who had been seated on a low stool, has risen to her feet and now sees why her papa has not been attending to her. The snow is falling less thickly, and the fair head of Signora Evelina has appeared behind the window-panes over the way.

Brave little woman! She has actually opened the window, and is clearing the snow off the sill with a fire-shovel. Her eyes meet Signor Odoardo's; she smiles and shakes her head, as though to say: What hateful weather!

He would be an ill-mannered boor who should not feel impelled to say a word to the dauntless Signor Evelina. Signor Odoardo, who is not an ill-mannered boor, yields to the temptation of opening the window for a moment.

"Bravo, Signora Evelina! I see you are not afraid of the snow."

"Oh, Signor Odoardo, what fiendish weather! . . . But, if I am not mistaken, that is Doretta with you. . . . How do you do, Doretta?"

"Doretta, come here and say how do you do to the lady."

"No, no—let her be, let her be! Children catch cold so easily—you had better shut the window. I suppose there is no hope of seeing you to-day?"

"Look at the condition of the streets!"

"Oh, you men . . . you men! . . . *The stronger sex* . . . but no matter. *Au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir.*"

The two windows are closed simultaneously, but this time Signora Evelina does not disappear. She is sitting there, close to the window, and it snows so lightly now that her wonderful profile is outlined as clearly as possible against the pane. Good heavens, how beautiful she is!

Signor Odoardo walks up and down the room, in the worst of humors. He feels that it is wrong not to go and see the fascinating widow, and that to go and see her would be still more wrong. The cloud has settled again upon Doretta's forehead, the same cloud that darkened it in the morning.

Not a word is said of La Fontaine's fable. Instead, Signor Odoardo grumbles irritably:

"This blessed room is as cold as ever."

"Why should n't it be," Doretta retorts with a touch of asperity, "when you open the window every few minutes?"

"Oho," Signor Odoardo says to himself, "it is time to have this matter out."

And, going up to Doretta, he takes her by the hand, leads her to the sofa, and lifts her on his knee.

"Now, then, Doretta, why is it that you are so disagreeable to Signora Evelina?"

The little girl, not knowing what to answer, grows red and embarrassed.

"What has Signora Evelina done to you?" her father continues.

"She has n't done anything to me."

"And yet you don't like her."

Profound silence.

"And *she* likes you so much!"

"I don't care if she does!"

"You naughty child! . . . And what if, one of these days, you had to live with Signora Evelina?"

"I won't live with her—I won't live with her!" the child bursts out.

"Now you are talking foolishly," Signor Odoardo admonishes her in a severe tone, setting her down from his knee.

She bursts into passionate weeping.

"Come, Doretta, come. . . . Is this the way you keep your daddy company? . . . Enough of this, Doretta."

But, say what he pleases, Doretta must have her cry. Her brown eyes are swimming in tears.

her little breast heaves, her voice is broken by sobs.

"What ridiculous whims!" Signor Odoardo exclaims, throwing his head back against the sofa cushions.

Signor Odoardo is unjust, and, what is worse, he does not believe what he is saying. He knows that this is no whim of Doretta's. He knows it better than the child herself, who would probably find it difficult to explain what she is undergoing. It is at once the presentiment of a new danger and the renewal of a bygone sorrow. Doretta was barely six years old when her mother died, and yet her remembrance is indelibly impressed upon the child's mind. And now it seems as though her mother were dying again.

"When you have finished crying, Doretta, you may come here," Signor Odoardo says.

Doretta, crouching in a corner of the room, cries less vehemently, but has not yet finished crying. Just like the weather outside,—it snows less heavily, but it still snows.

Signor Odoardo covers his eyes with his hand.

How many thoughts are thronging through his head, how many affections are contending in his heart! If he could but banish the vision of Signora Evelina—but he tries in vain. He is haunted by those blue eyes, by that persuasive smile, that graceful and harmonious presence.

He has but to say the word, and he knows that she will be his, to brighten his solitary home, and fill it with life and love. Her presence would take ten years from his age, he would feel as he did when he was betrothed for the first time. And yet—no; it would not be quite like the first time.

He is not the same man that he was then, and she, *the other*, ah, how different *she* was from the Signora Evelina! How modest and shy she was! How girlishly reserved, even in the expression of her love! How beautiful were her sudden blushes, how sweet the droop of her long, shyly-lowered lashes! He had known her first in the intimacy of her own home, simple, shy, a good daughter and a good sister, as she was destined to be a good wife and mother. For a while he had loved her in silence, and she had returned his love. One day, walking beside her in the garden, he had seized her hand with sudden impetuosity, and raising it to his lips had said, "I care for you so much!" and she, pale and trembling, had run to her mother's arms, crying out, "Oh, how happy I am!"

Ah, those dear days—those dear days! He was a poet then; with the accent of sincerest passion he whispered in his love's ear:

> "I love thee more than all the world beside,
> My only faith and hope thou art,
> My God, my country, and my bride—
> Sole love of this unchanging heart!"

Very bad poetry, but deliciously thrilling to his young betrothed. Oh, the dear, dear days! Oh, the long hours that pass like a flash in delightful talk, the secrets that the soul first reveals to itself in revealing them to the beloved, the caresses longed for and yet half feared, the lovers' quarrels, the tears that are kissed away, the shynesses, the simplicity, the abandonment of a pure and passionate love—who may hope to know you twice in a lifetime?

No, Signora Evelina can never restore what he has lost to Signor Odoardo. No, this self-possessed widow, who, after six months of mourning, has already started on the hunt for a second husband, cannot inspire him with the faith that he felt in *the other*. Ah, first-loved women, why is it that you must die? For the dead give no kisses, no caresses, and the living long to be caressed and kissed.

Who talks of kisses? Here is one that has alit, all soft and warm, on Signor Odoardo's lips, rousing him with a start.—Ah! . . . Is it you, Doretta?—It is Doretta, who says nothing, but who is longing to make it up with her daddy. She lays her cheek against his, he presses her little head close, lest she should escape from him. He too is silent—what can he say to her?

It is growing dark, and the eyes of the cat Melanio begin to glitter in the corner by the stove.

The man-servant knocks and asks if he is to bring the lamp.

"Make up the fire first," Signor Odoardo says.

The wood crackles and snaps, and sends up showers of sparks; then it bursts into flame, blazing away with a regular, monotonous sound, like the breath of a sleeping giant. In the dusk the firelight flashes upon the walls, brings out the pattern of the wall-paper, and travels far enough to illuminate a corner of the desk. The shadows lengthen and then shorten again, thicken and then shrink; everything in the room seems to be continually changing its size and shape. Signor Odoardo, giving free rein to his thoughts, evokes the vision of his married life, sees the baby's cradle, recalls her first cries and smiles, feels again his dying wife's last kiss, and hears the last word upon her lips,— *Doretta.* No, no, it is impossible that he should ever do anything to make his Doretta unhappy! And yet he is not sure of resisting Signora Evelina's wiles; he is almost afraid that, when he sees his enchantress on the morrow, all his strong resolves may take flight. There is but one way out of it.

"Doretta," says Signor Odoardo.

"Father?"

"Are you going to copy out your letter to your grandmamma this evening?"

"Yes, father."

"Would n't you rather go and see your grandmamma yourself?"

"With whom?" the child falters anxiously, her little heart beating a frantic tattoo as she awaits his answer.

"With me, Doretta."

"With *you*, daddy?" she exclaims, hardly daring to believe her ears.

"Yes, with me; with your daddy."

"Oh, daddy, *daddy!*" she cries, her little arms about his neck, her kisses covering his face. "Oh, daddy, my own dear daddy! When shall we start?"

"To-morrow morning, if you 're not afraid of the snow."

"Why not now? Why not at once?"

"Gently—gently. Good Lord, does n't the child want her dinner first?"

And Signor Odoardo, gently detaching himself from his daughter's embrace, rises and rings for the lamp. Then, instinctively, he glances once more towards the window. In the opposite house all is dark, and Signora Evelina's profile is no longer outlined against the pane. The weather is still threatening, and now and then a snowflake falls. The servant closes the shutters and draws the curtains, so that no profane gaze may penetrate into the domestic sanctuary.

"We had better dine in here," Signor Odoardo

says. "The dining-room must be as cold as Greenland."

Doretta, meanwhile, is convulsing the kitchen with the noisy announcement of the impending journey. At first she is thought to be joking, but when she establishes the fact that she is speaking seriously, it is respectfully pointed out to her that the master of the house must be crazy. To start on a journey in the depth of winter, and in such weather! If at least they were to wait for a fine day!

But what does Doretta care for the comments of the kitchen? She is beside herself with joy. She sings, she dances about the room, and breaks off every moment or two to give her father a kiss. Then she pours out the fulness of her emotion upon the cat Melanio and the doll Nini, promising the latter to bring her back a new frock from Milan.

At dinner she eats little and talks incessantly of the journey, asking again and again what time it is, and at what time they are to start.

"Are you afraid of missing the train?" Signor Odoardo asks with a smile.

And yet, though he dissembles his impatience, it is as great as hers. He longs to go away, far away. Perhaps he may not return until spring. He orders his luggage packed for an absence of two months.

Doretta goes to bed early, but all night long

she tosses about under the bed-clothes, waking her nurse twenty times to ask: "Is it time to get up?"

Signor Odoardo, too, is awake when the man-servant comes to call him the next morning at six o'clock.

"What sort of a day is it?"

"Very bad, sir—just such another as yesterday. In fact, if I might make the suggestion, sir, if it's not necessary for you to start to-day—"

"It is, Angelo. Absolutely necessary."

At the station there are only a few sleepy, depressed-looking travellers wrapped in furs. They are all grumbling about the weather, about the cold, about the earliness of the hour, and declaring that nothing but the most urgent business would have got them out of bed at that time of day. There is but one person in the station who is all liveliness and smiles—Doretta.

The first-class compartment in which Signor Odoardo and his daughter find themselves is bitterly cold, in spite of foot-warmers, but Doretta finds the temperature delicious, and, if she dared, would open the windows for the pleasure of looking out.

"Are you happy, Doretta?"

"Oh, *so* happy!"

Ten years earlier, on a pleasanter day, but also in winter, Signor Odoardo had started on

his wedding-journey. Opposite him had sat a young girl, who looked as much like Doretta as a woman can look like a child; a pretty, sedate young girl, oh, so sweetly, tenderly in love with Signor Odoardo. And as the train started he had asked her the same question:

"Are you happy, Maria?"

And she had answered:

"Oh, *so* happy!" just like Doretta.

The train races and flies. Farewell, farewell, for ever, Signora Evelina.

And did Signora Evelina die of despair?

Oh, no; Signora Evelina has a perfect disposition and a delightful home. The perfect disposition enables her not to take things too seriously, the delightful home affords her a thousand distractions. Its windows do not all look towards Signor Odoardo's residence. One of them, for example, commands a little garden belonging to a worthy bachelor who smokes his pipe there on pleasant days. Signora Evelina finds the worthy bachelor to her taste, and the worthy bachelor, who is an average-adjuster by profession, admires Signora Evelina's eyes, and considers her handsomely and solidly enough put together to rank A No. 1 on Lloyd's registers.

The result is that the bachelor now and then looks up at the window, and the Signora Evelina now and then looks down at the garden. The

weather not being propitious to out-of-door conversation, Signora Evelina at length invites her neighbor to come and pay her a visit. Her neighbor hesitates and she renews the invitation. How can one resist such a charming woman? And what does one visit signify? Nothing at all. The excellent average-adjuster has every reason to be pleased with his reception, the more so as Signora Evelina actually gives him leave to bring his pipe the next time he comes. She adores the smell of a pipe. Signora Evelina is an ideal woman, just the wife for a business man who had not positively made up his mind to remain single. And as to that, muses the average-adjuster, have I ever positively made up my mind to remain single, and if I have, who is to prevent my changing it?

And so it comes to pass that when, after an absence of three months, Signor Odoardo returns home with Doretta, he receives notice of the approaching marriage of Signora Evelina Chiocci, widow Ramboldi, with Signor Archimede Fagiuolo.

"Fagiuolo!" shouts Doretta, "*Fagiuolo!*"*

The name seems to excite her unbounded hilarity; but I am under the impression that the real cause of her merriment is not so much Signora Evelina's husband as Signora Evelina's marriage.

* *Fagiuolo:* a simpleton.

COLLEGE FRIENDS

BY

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

The Translation by Edith Wharton.

COLLEGE FRIENDS*

BY EDMONDO DE AMICIS

I.

THERE are many who write down every evening what they have done during the day; some who keep a record of the plays they have seen, the books they have read, the cigars they have smoked—but is there one man in a hundred, nay, in a thousand, who, at the end of the year, or even once in a lifetime, draws up a list of the people he has known? I don't mean his intimate friends, of course—the few whom he sees, or with whom he corresponds; but the multitude of people met in the past, and perhaps never to be encountered again, of whom the recollection returns from time to time at longer and longer

* Although "College Friends" is rather a reverie than in any strict sense a story (something in the spirit of "The Reveries of a Bachelor," if an analogy may be sought in another literature), it has been thought best to include it here as one of the best-known of De Amicis' shorter writings. Indeed it is the leading piece in his chief volume of "*Novelle*," so that he has himself included it with his tales.

intervals as the years go by, until at length it wholly fades away. Which of us has not forgotten a hundred once familiar names, lost all trace of a hundred once familiar lives? And yet to my mind this forgetfulness implies such a loss in the way of experience, that if I could live my life over again I should devote at least half an hour a day to the tedious task of recording the names and histories of the people I met, however uninteresting they might appear.

What strange and complex annals I should possess had I kept such a list of my earliest school-friends, supplementing it as time went on by any news of them that I could continue to obtain, and keeping track, as best I might, of the principal changes in their lives! As it is, of the two or three hundred lads that I knew there are but twenty or thirty whom I can recall, or with whose occupations and whereabouts I am acquainted—of the others I know absolutely nothing. For a few years I kept them all vividly in mind; three hundred rosy faces smiled at me, three hundred schoolboy jackets testified more or less distinctly to the paternal standing, from the velvet coat of the mayor's son to the floury roundabout of the baker's offspring; I still heard all their different voices; I saw where each one sat in school; I recalled their words, their attitudes, their gestures. Gradually all the faces melted into a rosy blur, the jackets into a

uniform neutral tint; the gestures were blent in a vague ripple of movement, and at last a thick mist enveloped all and the vision disappeared.

It grieves me that it should be so, and many a time I long to burst through the mist and evoke the hidden vision. But, alas! my comrades are all scattered; and were I to try to seek them out, one by one, how many devious twists and turns I should have to make, and to what strange places my search would lead me! From a sacristy I should pass to barracks, from barracks to a laboratory, thence to a lawyer's office; from the lawyer's office to a prison, from the prison to a theatre, from the theatre, alas! to a cemetery, and thence, perhaps, to a merchant vessel lying in some American or Eastern port. Who knows what adventures, what misfortunes, what domestic tragedies, what transformations in appearance, in habits, in life, would be found to have befallen that mere handful of humanity, within that short space of time!

And yet those are not the friends that I most long to see again. Indeed, if we analyze that sense of mournful yearning which makes us turn back to childhood, we shall be surprised to find how faint is the longing for our old comrades, nay, we may even discover that no such sentiment exists in us. And why should it, after all? We were often together, we were merry, we sought each other out, we desired each other's compan-

ionship; but there was no interchange between us of anything that draws together, that binds closer, that leaves its mark upon the soul. Our friendships were unmade as lightly as they were made. What we wanted was somebody to echo our laughter, to climb trees with us, and return the ball well; and as the pluckiest, liveliest, and most active boys were best fitted to meet these requirements, it was upon them that our choice usually fell. But did we feel kindly towards the weaklings? Did it ever occur to us, when a comrade looked sad, to ask: What ails you? or, if he answered that somebody lay dead at home, did we have any tears for his sorrow? Ah, we were not real friends!

It has probably happened to many of you to come across a companion of your primary-school days, after the lapse of fifteen years or so. You receive a letter in an unfamiliar hand, you glance at the signature, and you shout out: "What? Is *he* alive?"

On with your hat and off you rush to the hotel. Your heart thumps as you run, and you race upstairs to his door in hot haste, laughing, rejoicing, and thinking to yourself that you would n't have missed those few minutes for any amount of money. Well, those few minutes are the best. You bounce into the room, and find yourself embracing a strange man in whom, as you look at him more closely, you can just discern some faint

resemblance to the lad you used to know; one of you exclaims, "How are you, old man?" the other plunges breathlessly into some old school reminiscence; and then . . . that 's all.

You begin to say to yourself: "Who *is* this strange man? what has he been doing all these years? what has been going on in his soul? is he good or bad, a believer or a sceptic? I have nothing in common with him, I don't know the man! He must be observed and studied first—how can I call him a friend?"

What you think of him, he thinks of you, and conversation languishes. With your first words you may have discovered that you and he have followed opposite paths in life; he betrays his democratic tendencies, you, your monarchical leanings; you try him on literature, he retaliates with the culture of silk-worms. Before telling him that you are married, you take the precaution to ask if he has a wife; he answers, "What do you take me for?" and you take leave with a touch of the finger-tips and a smile that has died at its birth.

The friends of infancy! Dear indeed above all others when the years of boyhood have been spent with them; mere phantoms otherwise! And childhood itself! I have never been able to understand why people long to return to it. Why mourn for years without toil, without suffering, without intelligent belief, without those outbursts of fierce and bitter sorrow that purify the soul and

uplift the brow in a splendid renewal of hope and courage? Better a thousand times to suffer, to toil, to fight and weep, than to let life exhale itself in a ceaseless irresponsible gayety, causeless, objectless, and imperturbable! Better to stand bleeding on the breach than to lie dreaming among the flowers.

II.

I was seventeen years old when I made the acquaintance of my dearest friends, in a splendid palace which I see before me as clearly as though I had left it only yesterday. I see the great courtyard, the stately porticos, the saloons adorned with columns, statues and bas-reliefs; and, amidst these beautiful and magnificent objects, vestiges of the bygone splendors of the ducal residence, the long lines of bedsteads and school-benches, the hanging rows of uniforms, dirks and rifles. Five hundred youths are scattered about those courts and corridors and staircases; a dull murmur of voices, broken by loud shouts and sonorous laughter, reverberates through the most distant recesses of the huge edifice. What animation! What life! What varieties of type, of speech and gesture! Youths of athletic build, with great moustaches and stentorian voices; youths as slim and sweet as girls; the dusky skin and coal-black eyes of Sicily; the

fair-haired, blue-eyed faces of the north; the excited gesticulation of Naples, the silvery Tuscan intonation, the rattling Venetian chatter, a hundred groups, a hundred dialects; on this side, songs and noisy talk, on that side running, jumping, and hand-clapping; men of every class, sons of dukes, senators, generals, shopkeepers, government *employés;* a strange assemblage, suggesting the university, the monastery, and the barracks; with talk of women, war, novels, the orders of the day; a life teeming with feminine meannesses and virile ambitions; a life of mortal *ennui* and frantic gayety, a medley of sentiments, actions, and incidents, absurd, tragic, or delightful, from which the pen of a great humorist could extract the materials for a masterpiece.

Such was the military college of Modena in the year 1865.

III.

I CANNOT recall the two years that I spent there without being beset by a throng of memories from which I can free myself only by passing them all in review, one after another, like pictures in a magic-lantern; now laughing, now sighing, now shaking my head, but feeling all the while that each episode is dear to me and will never be forgotten while I live.

How well I remember the first grief of my military life, a blow that befell me a few days after I had entered college all aglow with the poetry of war. It was the morning on which caps were distributed. Each new recruit of the company found one that fitted him, but all were too small for me, and the captain turned upon me furiously.

"Are you aware that the commissary stores will have to be reopened just for you?" And I heard him mutter after a pause, "What are you going to do with a head like that?"

Great God, what I underwent at that moment! What—be a soldier? I thought. Never! Better beg my bread in the streets—better die and have done with it!

Then I remember an officer, an old soldier, gruff but kindly, who had a way of smiling whenever he looked at me. How that smile used to exasperate me! I had made up my mind to demand an explanation, to let him know that I did n't propose to be any man's butt, when one evening he called me to him, and having given me to understand that he had heard something about me and that he wanted to know if it were really true (I was to speak frankly, for it would do me no harm), he finally, with many coughs and smiles and furtive glances, whispered in my ear: "Is it true that you write poetry?"

I recall, too, the insuperable difficulty of

accomplishing the manual tasks imposed upon me, especially that of sewing on my buttons—how every few seconds the needle would slip through my fingers, till the thread was tangled up in a veritable spider's web, while the button hung as loose as ever, to the derision of my companions and the disgust of the drill-sergeant, whose contemptuous—"You may be a great hand at rhyming, but when it comes to sewing on buttons you 're a hundred years behind the times," seemed to exile me to the depths of the eighteenth century.

I see the great refectory, where a battalion might have drilled; I see the long tables, the five hundred heads bent above the plates, the rapid motion of five hundred forks, of a thousand hands and sixteen thousand teeth; the swarm of servants running here and there, called to, scolded, hurried, on every side at once; I hear the clatter of dishes, the deafening noise, the voices choked with food crying out: "Bread—bread!" and I feel once more the formidable appetite, the herculean strength of jaw, the exuberant life and spirits of those far-off days.

The scene changes, and I see myself locked in a narrow cell on the fifth floor, a jug of water at my side, a piece of black bread in my hand, with unkempt hair and unshorn chin, and the image of Silvio Pellico before me; condemned to ten days' imprisonment for having made an address

of thanks to the professor of chemistry on the occasion of his closing lecture, thereby committing an infraction of article number so-and-so of the regulation forbidding any cadet to speak in public in the name of his companions. And to this day I can hear the Major saying: "Take my advice and never let your imagination run away with you;" citing the example of his old schoolfellow, the poet Regaldi, who had got into just such a scrape, and concluding with the warning that "poetry always made men make asses of themselves."

Yes, I see it all as vividly as though I were reliving the very same life again—the silent march of the companies at night down the long, faintly-lit corridors; the professors behind their desks, deafening us with their Gustavus-Adolphuses, their Fredericks the Great, and their Napoleons; the great lecture-rooms full of motionless faces; the huge, dim dormitories, resounding with the respirations of a hundred pairs of lungs; the garden, the piazza, the ramparts, the winding Modenese sheets, the *cafés* full of graduates devouring pastry, the picnics in the country, the excursions to neighboring villages, the intrigues, the studies, the rivalries, the sadnesses, the enmities, the friendships.

IV.

A FEW days before the graduating examinations we were given leave to study wherever we pleased. There were two hundred of us in the second class, and we dispersed ourselves all over the palace, in groups of five or six friends, each group in a separate room, and began the long, desperate grind, cramming away day and night, with only an occasional interruption to discuss the coming examination and our future prospects.

How cheerily we talked, and how bright our anticipations were! After two years of imprisonment, home, freedom, and epaulets were suddenly within our reach. Aside from the common satisfaction of being promoted to be an officer, each one of us had his own special reasons for rejoicing. With one of us it was the satisfaction of being able to say to the family that had pinched and denied itself to pay for his schooling, "Here I am, good people, nineteen years old and able to shift for myself;" with another, the fun of swaggering in full uniform, with clanking heels and rattling sword, into the quiet house where the old uncle who had been so generous sat waiting to welcome him home; with a third, the joy of mounting a familiar staircase, brevet in pocket, and knocking at a certain door, behind which a girlish voice would be heard exclaiming,

"There he is!"—the voice of the little cousin to whom he had said good-bye, two years before, in her parents' presence, reassured only by the non-committal phrase: "Well, well, go to college first and make a man of yourself; then we 'll see."

Already we saw ourselves surrounded by children eager to finger our sabres, by girls who signed to us as we passed, by old men who clapped us on the shoulder, by mothers crying, "How splendidly he looks!" So that it was with the greatest difficulty that we shook off this importunate folk, saying to ourselves: "Presently, presently, all in good time; but just now, really, you must let us be!"

Then, each following the bent of his disposition, his habits, and his plans, we confided to one another the regiment, province, and city to which we hoped to be assigned. Some of us longed for the noise and merriment of the Milanese carnivals, and dreamed of theatres, balls and convivial suppers. One sighed for a sweet Tuscan village, perched on a hilltop, where, in command of his thirty men, he might spend the peaceful spring days in collecting songs and proverbs among the country-folk. Another longed to carry on his studies in the unbroken solitude of a lonely Alpine fortress, hemmed in by ravines and precipices. One of us craved a life of adventure in the Calabrian forests; another, the activities of some great seaboard city; a third, an

island of the Tyrrhenian Sea. We divided up Italy among ourselves a hundred times a day, as though we had been staking off plots in a garden; and each of us detailed to the others the beauties of his chosen home, and all agreed that every one of the places selected would be beautiful and delightful to live in.

And then—war! It was sure to come sooner or later. Hardly was the word mentioned when our books were hurled into a corner and we were all talking at once, our faces flushed, our voices loud and excited. War, to us, was a superhuman vision in which the spirit lost itself as in some strange intoxication; a far-off, rose-colored horizon, etched with the black profiles of gigantic mountains; legion after legion, with flying banners and the sound of music, endlessly ascending the mountain-side; and high up, on the topmost ridges, surrounded by the enemy, our own figures far in advance of the others, dashing forward with brandished swords; while down the farther slope a torrent of foot, horse, and artillery plunged wildly through darkness to an unknown abyss.

A medal for gallantry? Which one of us would not have won it? Lose the battle? But could Italians be defeated? Death—but who feared to die? And did anybody ever die at nineteen? Who could tell what strange and marvellous adventures awaited us, what sights we should see! Perhaps some foreign expedi-

tion; a war in the East; was not the Eastern question still stirring? We wandered in imagination over seas and mountains, we saw the marshalling of fleets and armies, we glowed with impatience, we cried out within ourselves, "Only give us time to pass our examinations, and we 'll be there too!"

And then the examinations took place, and on a beautiful July morning the doors of the ducal palace were thrown open and we were told to go forth and seek our destiny. And with a great cry we dashed out, and scattered ourselves like a flight of birds over the length and breadth of Italy.

V

And now:

Six years have gone by, only six years, and what a long and strange and varied romance might be woven out of the lives of those two hundred college comrades! I have seen many of them since we graduated, and have had news of many others, and I have a way of passing them in review one after another, and questioning them mentally; and what I see and hear fills me with a wonder not unmixed with sadness. And here they all are.

The first that I see are a group of brown, broad-shouldered, bearded men, whom I do not recall just at first; but when they smile at me I

recognize the slender fair boys who used to look so girlish.

"Is it really you?" I exclaim, and they answer, "Yes," with a deep sonorous note so different from the boyish voices I had expected to hear, that I start back involuntarily.

And these others? Their features are not changed, to be sure, their figures are as robust and well set-up as ever, but the smile has vanished, there is no brightness in the eye.

"What has happened to you?" I ask; and they answer, "Nothing."

Ah, how much better that some misfortune should have befallen them than that the years alone, and only six short years, should have had the power so sadly to transform them!

Here are others. Good God! One, two, three, five of them; let me look again; yes—gray-headed! What—at twenty-seven! Tell me—what happened? They shrug their shoulders and pass on.

Then I see a long file of my own friends, some of them the wildest of the class, one with a baby in his arms, one with a child by the hand, another leading two. What? So-and-so married? So-and-so a *père de famille?* Who would have thought it?

Here come others; some, with bowed heads and reddened eyes, sign to me sadly in passing. There is crape upon their sleeves.

Others, with heads high and flashing eyes, point exultantly to their breasts. Our college dream, the military medal—ah, lucky fellows!

And here are some, moving slowly, and so pale, so emaciated, that I hardly know them. Ah me! The surgeon's knife has probed those splendid statuesque limbs, once bared with such boyish pride on the banks of the Panaro; the surgeon's knife, seeking for German bullets, while the blood streamed and the amputated limbs dropped from the poor maimed trunks. Alas, poor friends! But at least they have remained with us, rewarded for their sacrifice by the love and gratitude of all.

But what 's become of so-and-so?

He died on the march through Lombardy.

And so-and-so?

Killed by a *mitrailleuse* at Monte Croce.

And my friend so-and-so?

He died of a rifle-bullet, in the hospital at Verona.

And the fellow who sat next to me in class?

He died of cholera in Sicily.

Enough—enough!

So they all pass by, fading into the distance, while my fancy hastens back over the road they have travelled, seeking traces of their passage—how many and what diverse traces!

Here, books and papers scattered on the floor, half-finished projects of battles, an overturned

table, a smoking candle-end, tokens of a studious vigil. There, broken chairs, fragments of glasses, the remains of a carouse. Farther on, an expanse of waste ground, two bloody swords, deep footprints, the impress of a fallen body. Here, a table covered with a torn green cloth and strewn with cards and dice; yonder, in the grass, a scented love-letter and a knot of faded violets. Over there a graveyard cross, with the inscription: *To my Mother.* And farther on more cards, cast-off uniforms, women's portraits, tailors' bills, bills of exchange, swords, flowers, blood. What a vast tapestry one can weave with those few broken and tangled threads! What loves, what griefs, what struggles, follies, and disasters one divines and comprehends! Many a high and generous impulse too; but how much more of squandered opportunity and effort!

And even if nothing had been squandered, if, in those six years, not a day, not an hour, had been stolen from our work, if we had not opened our hearts to any affections but those that exalt the mind and give serenity to life, a great and dear illusion must still have been lost to us; an illusion that in vanishing has taken with it much of our strength and hope; the illusion of that distant rose-colored horizon, edged with the black profiles of gigantic mountains, legion after legion hurling itself upon the enemy with flying banners and the sound of martial music!

A lost war.

And if we had not lost that illusion, would not some other have vanished in its place?

VI.

I THINK of myself and say: "How far it is from nineteen to twenty-five!"

Wherever I went, then, I was the youngest, since boys under nineteen don't mix on equal terms with men; and I knew that whoever I met envied me three things: my youth, my hopes, and my light-heartedness. And now, wherever I go, I meet young fellows who look at me and speak to me with the deference shown to an elder brother; and, as I talk to them, I am conscious of making an effort to appear as cheery as they, and even find myself wondering what stuff they are made of.

The other day, looking at a friend's child, a little girl of six, I said to him, half laughing, "Who knows?"

"Isn't there rather too much disparity of age?" he answered.

I was silent, half-startled; then, counting up the years on my fingers, I murmured sadly, "Yes."

At nineteen I could say of any little maid I met, that one day she might become my wife; the rising generation belonged to me; but now

there is a part of humanity for which I am already too old!

And the future—once an undefined bright background, on which fancy sketched all that was fairest and most desirable, without one warning from the voice of reason; now, clearly outlined and distinctly colored, it takes such precise shape that I can almost guess what it is to be, can see my path traced out for me, and the goal to which it leads. And so, marvels and glories, farewell!

And mankind? Well—I never was mistrustful, nor inclined to see the bad rather than the good in human nature; indeed, I have a friend who is so exasperated by my persistent optimism that, when I enlarge upon my affection for my kind, he invariably answers, "Wait till your turn comes!"

And yet, how much is gone already of the *naïf* abandonment of those boyish friendships, of that candid and ready admiration that, like a well-adjusted spring, leapt forth at a touch, even when I heard a stranger praised! Two or three disillusionments have sufficed to weaken that spring. Already I begin to question my own enthusiasm, and a rising doubt silences the warm, frank words of affection that once leapt involuntarily to my lips. I read with dry eyes many a book that I used to cry over; when I read poetry my voice trembles less often than it

did; my laugh is no longer the sonorous irresistible peal that once echoed through every corner of the house. When I look in the glass—is it fancy or reality?—I perceive in my face something that was not there six years ago, an indescribable look about the eyes, the brow, the mouth, that is imperceptible to others, but that I see and am troubled by. And I remember Leopardi's words, *At twenty-five the flower of youth begins to fade.* What? Am I beginning to fade? Am I on the downward slope? Have I travelled so far already? Why, thousands younger than I have graduated since my day from the college of Modena; I feel them pressing upon me, treading me down, urging me forward. The thought terrifies me. Stop a moment—let me draw breath; why must one devour life at this rate? I mean to take my stand here, motionless, firm as a rock; back with you! But the ground is sloping and slippery, my feet slide, there is nothing to catch hold of. Comrades, friends of my youth, come, let us hold fast to each other; let us clasp each other tight; don't let them overthrow us; let us stand fast! Ah, curse it, I feel the earth slipping away under me!

VII.

WELL, well—those are the mournful imaginings of rainy days. When the sun reappears, the soul grows clear like the sky, and there succeeds to my brief discouragement a state of mind in which it appears to me so foolish and so cowardly to fret because I see a change in my face, to mourn the careless light-heartedness of my youth, to rebel against the laws of nature in a burst of angry regret, that I am overcome with shame. I rouse myself, I scramble to my feet, I seize hold of my faith, my hopes, my intentions, I set to work again with a resolution full of joyful pride. At such moments I feel strong enough to face the approach of my thirtieth year, to await with serenity disillusionments, white hairs, sorrows, infirmities, and old age, my mind's eye fixed upon a far-off point of light that seems to grow larger as I advance. I march on with renewed courage; and to the noisy and drunken crew calling out to me to join them, I answer, No!—and to the knights of the doleful countenance, who shake their heads and say, "What if it were not true?"—I answer, without turning my eyes from that distant light, No!—and to the grave, proud men who point to their books and writings, and say with a smile of pity and derision, "It is all a dream!"—I answer, with my eyes still upon

that far-off light, and the great cry of a man who sees a ghost in his path, No! Ah, at such moments, what matters it that I must grow old and die? I toil, I wait, I believe!

VIII.

Most of my classmates have undergone the same change. Their faces have grown older, or sadder, as Leopardi would have us say; but with the faces the souls have grown graver also. I have spoken of certain changes in my friends that saddened me; but there are others which make me glad. Now and then it has happened to me to come across some of the most careless, happy-go-lucky of my classmates, and to be filled with wonder when I hear them speak of their country, of their work, of the duties to be performed, of the future to be prepared for. Owing, perhaps, to the many and great events of these last years, their characters have been suddenly and completely transformed. Some ruling motive—ambition, family cares, or the mere instinctive love of study—has gathered together and focused their vague thoughts and scattered powers; has brought about the habit of reflection, and turned their thoughts towards the great problem of life; has given to all a purpose, and a path to travel, and left them no time to mourn

the vanished past. We have all entered upon our second youth, with some disillusionments, with a little experience, and with the conviction that happiness—what little of it is given to us on earth—is not obtained by struggling, storming, and clamoring to heaven and earth *we must have it!*—but is slowly distilled from the inmost depths of the soul by the long persistence of quiet toil. Humble hopes have succeeded to our splendid visions; steady resolves, to our grand designs; and the dazzling vision of war, the goddess promising glory and delirium, has been replaced by the image of Italy, our mother, who promises only—and it is enough—the lofty consolation of having loved and served her.

IX.

Our souls have emerged fortified from the sorrow of the lost war.

One day, surely, Italy will re-echo from end to end with the great cry, "Come!"—and we shall spring to our feet, pale and proud, with the answering shout, "We are ready!"

Then, in the streets of our cities, thronged with people, with soldiers, horses, and wagons, amidst the clashing of arms and the blare of trumpets, we classmates shall meet again. I shall see them once more, many of them, perhaps, only for that short hour, some only for a moment.

At night, in the torchlit glare of a railway-station, we shall meet again, and greet each other in silence, hand in hand and eye to eye. No shouting, no songs, no joyous clamor, no vision of triumphal marches, no veiling of death's image in the light hopefulness of reunion; we shall say but one word to each other—good-bye—and that good-bye will be a promise, a vow; that good-bye will mean, "This time, there will be no descending from the mountains; you and I, lad, will be left lying on the summit."

And often, traversing a long expanse of time, I evoke the vision of distant battle-fields on which the lot of Italy is decided. My fancy hastens from valley to valley, from hill to hill; and at all the most difficult passages, at all the posts of danger, I see one of my old classmates, a gray-haired colonel or general, at the head of his regiment or of his brigade; and I love to picture him at the moment when, attacked by a heavy force of the enemy, he directs the defence.

The two sides have joined battle, and from a neighboring height, he observes the fighting below. Poor friend! At that moment, perhaps, life and honor hang in the balance; thirty years of study, of hopes, of sacrifices, are about to be crowned with glory or scattered like a handful of dust down that green slope at his feet—it all hangs on a thread. Pale and motionless he stands there watching, the sabre trembling in his

convulsive grasp. I am near him, my eye is upon his face, I feel and see and tremble with him, I live his life.

Courage, friend! Your spirit has passed into your men, the fight is theirs, never fear! That uncertain movement over there towards the right wing is but the momentary confusion caused by some inequality of the ground; they are not falling back, man. Listen, the shouts are louder, the firing grows heavier, the last battalion has been thrown into action, all your men are fighting. Ah! how his gaze hurries from one end of the line to the other, how pale he has grown; life seems suspended. What are those distant voices? What flame rushes to his face? What is this smile, this upward glance? Victory!—but, by God, man, rein in your horse, look at me—here I am, your old classmate who holds out his arms to you—and now off, down to the battlefield among your soldiers—and God be with you!

He has put his charger to the gallop and disappeared.

And who knows how many of my friends may find themselves some day, at some hour of their lives, face to face with such an ordeal? Who knows how many an act of patriotism will make their names illustrious, how dear to the people some of these names may become? What if some day I were to see the youth who sat next

to me in the class-room or at table, or slept beside me in the dormitory, riding through the streets on a white horse, in a general's uniform, covered with flowers and surrounded by rejoicing crowds? And who knows—may I not knock at the door of some other, and throw my arms about the pale, sad figure, grown ten years older in a few months; telling him that the popular verdict is unjust, that there are many who know that he is not to blame for the disaster, that sooner or later the excitement will subside, and the victims of the first rash judgment be restored to honor; that his name is still dear and respected, that he must not despond, that he must take heart and keep on hoping?

Ah, when I think of the fierce trials that life has in store for many of my classmates, of all that they may do to benefit their country, of all that their glory will cost them; when I, who have left the army, think of all this, I feel that, not to be outdone by my old school-fellows in paying the debt of gratitude that I owe my country, I ought to toil without ceasing, to spend my nights in study, to treasure my youth and strength as a means of sustaining my intellectual effort; that, in order to preach the beauty of goodness, I ought to lead a blameless life; that I ought to keep alive that glowing affection, a spark of which I may sometimes communicate to others; to study children, the people, and the

poor, and to write for their benefit; to let no ignoble word fall from my pen, to sacrifice all my inclinations to the common welfare, never to lose heart, never to strive for approval, to hope for nothing and long for nothing but the day on which I may at last say to myself: I have done what I could, my life has not been useless, I am satisfied.

X.

And this is the thought that comes to me in closing: I should like to have before me a lad of seventeen, well-bred and kindly, but ignorant of the human heart, as we all are at that age; and putting a friendly hand on his shoulder, I should like to say to him:

"Do you want to make sure of a peaceful and untroubled future? Treat your friends as considerately as you would a woman, for, believe me, every harsh word or ill-mannered act (however excusable, however long-forgotten) will return some day to pain and trouble you. Recalling my friends after all these years, I remember a quarrel that I had with one of them, a sharp word exchanged with another, the resolve, maintained for many months, not to speak to a third. Puerilities, if you like, and yet how glad I should be not to have to reproach myself with them! And, though I feel sure that they have

made no more impression upon others than upon myself, how much I wish for an opportunity of convincing myself of the fact, of dissipating any slight shadow that may have lingered in the minds of my friends!

"When one's youth is almost past, and one thinks of the years that have flown so quickly and of those that will fly faster yet, of the little good one has done and the little there is still time to accomplish, the pride that set one against one's friends seems so petty, ridiculous and contemptible a sentiment, that one longs for the power of returning to the past, of renewing the old discussions in a friendly tone, of extending a conciliatory hand in place of every angry shrug, of seeking out the friends one has offended, looking them in the face and saying, 'Shall bygones be bygones, old man?'"

XI.

Dear friends! If only because it was in your company that I first wandered over my country, how could my thoughts cease to seek you out, my heart to desire you?

When, from the ship's deck, I saw the gulf of Naples whiten in the distance, and clasping my hands, laughing and thinking of my mother, I cried out, It is a dream!—when, from the summit of the Noviziate pass my gaze for the first

time embraced Messina, the straits, the Appennines and the cape of Spartivento, and I said to myself, half-sadly, Here Italy ends ;—when, from the top of Monte Croce, beyond the vast plain swarming with German regiments, I first beheld the towers of Verona, and stretching out my arms, as though fearful of their vanishing, cried out to them, Wait !—when, from the dike of Fusina, I saw Venice, far-off, azure, fantastic, and cried with wet eyes, Heavenly !—when Rome, surrounded by the smoke of our batteries, first burst upon me from the height of Monterondo, and I shouted, She is ours !—always, everywhere, one of you was beside me, to seize my arm and cry out : How beautiful is Italy ! —always one of you to mingle your tears, your laughter and your poetry with mine !

There is not a spot of Italy, not a joyful occurrence, nor profound emotion, which is not associated in my mind with the clank of a sword saying, 'I am here !'—and the hand-clasp of one of you, making me pause and wonder what has become of such an one, what he is doing and thinking, and whether he too remembers the good days we spent together.

It may fall to my lot to meet, in the future, many faithful, dear and generous friends, whose smiling images I already picture to myself ; but beyond their throng I shall always see your plumes waving and the numbers glittering on your caps ;

I shall always hurry towards you, crying out: Let us talk of our college days, of our travels, of war, of soldiers, and of Italy!

XII.

We old classmates will many of us doubtless live to see the twentieth century. Strange thought! I know, of course, that the transition from nineteen hundred to nineteen hundred and one will seem as natural as that from ninety-nine to a hundred, or from this year to next. And yet it seems to me that to see the first dawn of the new century will be like reaching the summit of some high mountain, and looking out over new countries and new horizons. I feel as though, that morning, something unexpected and marvellous would be revealed to us; as though there would be a sense almost of terror in finding one's self face to face with it; a sense of having been hurled, by some unseen power, from brink to brink of a measureless abyss.

Idle fancies! I know well enough what we shall be like when that time comes. I see a sitting-room with a fireplace in the corner, or rather many sitting-rooms with many fireplaces, and many old men seated, chin in hand, in arm-chairs near the hearth. Near by stands a table with a lamp on it, surrounded by a circle of children, or of nephews and nieces, who nudge

each other and point to their father or uncle, whispering, "Hush—he's asleep;"—and laughing at the grotesque expression that sleep has given to our wrinkled faces.

And then perhaps we shall wake, and the children will surround us, begging, as usual, for stories of "a long time ago," and asking with eager curiosity, "Uncle, did you ever see General Garibaldi?"—"Father, were you ever close to King Victor Emmanuel?"—"Grandpapa, did you ever hear Count Cavour speak?"

"Why, yes, child, many and many a time!"

"Oh, do tell us, what were they like? Did they look like their portraits? How did they talk?"

And we shall tell them everything, and gradually, as we talk, our voices will regain their old vigor, our cheeks will glow, and we shall watch with delight the brightening of those eager eyes, the proud uplifting of those innocent brows, and the impatient movement of the little hands, signing to us, at each pause, to go on with the story.

And what will have befallen the world by that time? Will a Victor Emmanuel III. rule over Italy? Will the *bersaglieri* be at Trent? Will one of our old friends, attached to the Ministry of the Interior, have been made Governor of Tunis? Will France have passed through another series of empires, republics, communes,

and monarchies? Will the threatened invasion of northern barbarians have taken place? Will England also have received her *coup-de-grâce?* Shall we have experimented with a Commune? Will our great poet have been born? The Church have been reformed? Rome rebuilt? Will there be any armies in those days? And we—what standing shall we have in our village or town? What shall we have done? How shall we have lived?

Ah, whatever has happened, whatever fate awaits us, if we have worked, and loved, and believed—then, when we sit at sunset in the big arm-chair on the terrace, and think of our families, of our friends, of the mountains, of the carnivals, of the Tyrrhenian islands that we dreamed of in our college days, we shall be sad, indeed, at the thought of parting before long from such dear souls and from so beautiful a country; but our faces will brighten with a smile serene and quiet as the dawn of a new youth, and tempering the bitterness of farewell with the tacit pledge of reunion.